

Fourth Thursday of Advent, December 23 Mal 3: 1-4, 23-24; Lk 1:46-56

When one thinks about John the Baptist on a family level, one thinks about the fact that he is the cousin of Jesus Christ. His mother, Elizabeth and Jesus' mother, Mary were cousins who took care of each other during their pregnancies. The family certainly shows the loving relationships they have. Mary in realizing her call to be the Mother of God goes right away to help Elizabeth as she was older and needed the support from Mary. We then read the story of how Elizabeth and Zachariah decide with the overseeing of the angel to call their child, John. As he grows and develops, we see growth and development and John begins his preaching. He is a holy man and appears at the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. John the Baptist is calling out to others to tell them that Jesus is coming, that He is the Messiah, the Son of God; they need to be baptized. He reminds them of the words of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and others. We think about the Jews and Gentiles at this time and this is a new thought for them. Has the Messiah really come to help them? John the Baptist is not only preaching about the Messiah but he lives the life of a humble, obedient follower of the Father. He brings the word of God all over the area and is persistent and constant in his preaching. He gives people the opportunity to connect with Jesus Christ. He does not call people to himself but points to Jesus and the message that He brings. It is a different message from the temple that gave the people certain procedures to follow but missed the heart of His message, which was to change their *hearts* and realize how they should live their lives.

Our world today is as complex as John the Baptist's life and the apostles. We are looking for the truth that presents itself in both word and sacrament. Just as the Jews and Gentiles tried to discern the truth for each other, so we seek out the truth through prayer, attention to the sacraments and our interactions with each other. After reading the reflection, we think back to what St. John the Baptist offered us a constant focus on Jesus Christ and a devotion to all that He brings. In our world as in the world of the disciples, it is a difficult task as those in our society have forgotten or have been distracted away from the words of Jesus. He wants us to live a grace-filled/prayer full life and bring the joy of doing so to all that we meet throughout the day. As John the Baptist brought His prayer life to the Father, we bring ours. We then bring the fruit of our work to our neighbors, friends, parishioners and family to live pointing out the way to Christ.

Holy Name Parishioner Eileen Knight