

In the first reading, the prophet Zephaniah says, “*Shout for joy, daughter of Zion, Israel, shout aloud*”. Paul, in the second reading invites the community of Philippi to rejoice, and always to rejoice. Why should they rejoice?...or, rather, Why should **we** rejoice?

Rejoicing is a fruit of faith. For the prophet Zephaniah, the Day of the Lord, instead of being one of retribution, becomes one of hope. The Prophet lays out the promises of the Lord, giving reasons for joy. The sentence is repealed. There is no judgement and, above all, the Lord, the King of Israel, is **in their midst**. This is actually the reason for rejoicing - **the presence** of the Lord; he sees the days of the anointed one, Christ, as the reason for rejoicing.

For us, there is a feeling of Christmas in the air. Some work places have already celebrated, while others are preparing to do so, in families, in church...there is a ‘*feeling of expectancy*’ as the gospel tells us. But why should we be expectant? Why should we rejoice?

Rejoicing for a Christian is a response to a faith experience, the experience of having been or being favoured by God; being looked upon by God. It is the experience of God’s mercy revealed to us in Emmanuel, that the one who was physically born on this planet, whom we celebrate in the Mystery of the Incarnation, is the key reminder or representation of God’s Mercy – the cause of our rejoicing.

We rejoice because God fulfils his promises in the ordinariness of our lives, daily, even now....God is being revealed to us in our families and in our world.

We rejoice that we are forgiven, shown mercy, and, above all, for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, with God being so near to us, dwelling in us through the Spirit, we need to rejoice. Yes, but we are also reminded of what this involves:

That in our preparations for the celebration of the Birth of the Lord this year, God, in Jesus Christ, becomes the centre of our preparations;

We prepare our hearts through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we encounter God’s mercy;

We cooperate in sharing the Good News of the Incarnation by reaching out to the needy among us, having concern for their spiritual needs, their emotional needs, their physical needs. In this way, we make God present to them too.

Let us share the fruits of our faith, rejoicing in the Lord by being less judgemental but more than anything allow *the peace of the Lord that surpasses all understanding* to dwell with us. *Rejoice, the Lord, your God is in your midst.*