

### The Christ We Do Not Know

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Advent is a time we prepare for the coming of the Lord: his coming to us sacramentally at Christmas, his coming to us individually at the end of our lives, and his coming to us collectively at the end of time. Now, suppose we are told that the Christ whom we are waiting for is already here in our midst as one of us, what difference would that make? Here is a story of the enormous difference that the awareness of the presence of Christ among us could make in our lives as individuals and as communities.

A certain monastery discovered that it was going through a crisis. Some of the monks left, no new candidates joined them, and people were no longer coming for prayer and consultation as they used to. The few monks that remained were becoming old and depressed and bitter in their relationship with one another. The abbot heard about a holy man, a hermit living alone in the woods and decided to consult him. He told the hermit how the monastery had dwindled and diminished and now looks like a skeleton of what it used to be. Only seven old monks remained. The hermit told the abbot that he has a secret for him. One of the monks now living in his monastery is actually the Messiah, but he is living in such a way that no one could recognize him.

With this revelation the abbot goes back to his monastery, summons a community meeting and recounts what the holy hermit told him. The aging monks look at each other in unbelief, trying to discern who among them could be the Christ. Could it be Brother Mark who prays all the time? But he has the holier-than-thou attitude toward others. Could it be Brother Joseph who is always ready to help? But he is always eating and drinking and cannot fast. The abbot reminded them that the Messiah has adopted some bad habits as way of camouflaging his real identity. This only made them more confused and they could not make a headway figuring out who was the Christ among them. At the end of the meeting what each one of the monks knew for sure

was that any of the monks, excepting himself, could be the Christ.

From that day, however, the monks began to treat one another with greater respect and humility, knowing that the person they are speaking to could be the very Christ. They began to show more love for one another, their common life became more brotherly and their common prayer more fervent. Slowly people began to take notice of the new spirit in the monastery and began coming back for retreats and spiritual direction. Word began to spread and, before you know it, candidates began to show up and the monastery began to grow again in number as the monks grew in zeal and holiness. All this because a man of God drew their attention to the truth that Christ was living in their midst as one of them.

In today's gospel John the Baptist tries to announce the same powerful message to the Jews of his time who were anxiously waiting for the coming of the Messiah. John tells them: "Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal" (John 1:26-27)

The reason the Jews of Jesus' time could not recognize him as the Messiah is that they had definite ideas on how the Messiah was going to come. The Messiah would suddenly descend from heaven in his divine power and majesty and establishes his reign by destroying the enemies of Israel. No one would know where he came from, humanly speaking, because he came from God (John 7:27). So when finally Jesus came born of a woman like every other person, they could not recognize them. He was too ordinary, too unimpressive.

After 2000 years, are we now better able to recognize Christ in the persons of the ordinary men and women in our midst together with their unimpressive attitudes, habits and appearances?

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 61:1-11    1 Thessalonians 5:16-24    John 1:6-28

December 14, 2014

## 將 臨 期 第 三 主 日

林 思 川 神 父

### 洗者若翰的見證

將臨期第三主日的彌撒禮儀充滿了「歡樂」氣氛，從進堂詠開始，這個禮儀主題就被清楚的表達出來：「你們應在主內常常歡樂，我再說一次，你們應當歡樂，因為主臨近了。」主禮神父所穿著的禮服，也由象徵補贖精神的嚴肅的紫色祭披，轉換為預示聖誕歡樂的粉紅色祭披。隨著這個主日，將臨期漸漸進入第二個階段，禮儀中心由勸告基督徒警醒不寐、等待人子由天上再度降來，轉為歡欣準備迎接耶穌誕生於歷史之中。教會習慣上稱這個主日為「喜樂主日」。

### 主日福音

這個主日的福音仍是以洗者若翰為主角。由於馬爾谷福音所有的相關資料太少，因此信友們在彌撒中一起聆聽若望福音第一章 6-8 節以及 19-28 節兩段關於洗者若翰的報導。和上個主日的福音(谷一 1-8) 相比較，若望福音中的若翰自稱他就是依撒意亞先知所預言的「曠野裏呼喊者的聲音」(若一 23)，前來為默西亞預備道路，這位默西亞不只是「在我以後要來」(谷一 7)，而是已經來到，祂是「你們中間站著的一位，是你們所不認識的」(若一 26)。

### 為一切人的見證 (若一 6-8)

若望福音和對觀福音一樣，在報導耶穌在歷史中公開發現之前，先敘述了若翰的工作。若望福音的作者在序言中先綜合了若翰的宣講：他被派遣來「為給光(耶穌)作證」，為把「眾人」引入信仰。若望福音的作者認為，信仰永遠以耶穌為對象，但卻是建築在一個見證的基礎上，在這段經文中是指若翰為在他之後要來的那一位所作的見證。若望福音中洗者若翰的見證的特點是，它不只是針對以色列人，而是為了「眾人」，意思是為了一切人。福音作者認為洗者若翰的見證超越歷史時空的限制，永遠具有效力。

### 若翰的見證

「這是若翰所做的見證」(若一 19) 這一句話清楚表明了若一 19-28 的經文意義。這段經文的形式是一個對話，包含五個問題和五個答覆；就內容而言，可以分為兩部分：首先是對若翰身份的「審問」(19-23)，其次是詢問他所施行的洗禮意義。

### 對若翰的身份審問

若翰的見證是指向信仰的，而且具有效力的。由於他是在耶路撒冷派來的代表，亦即「司祭和肋未人」之前作證，所以這是一個正式的、具有「法定效力」的見證。從一開始猶太人就是若翰的對手，拒絕他也不相信耶穌，他們如同一個「司法單位」來到若翰面前，提出問題審問他。福音中首先以三個否定性的答案，說明若翰隆重地拒絕三個不適於他身份的訴求：他既非來自達味家族的君王性默西亞、亦非厄里亞、也不是那位先知。在猶太傳統思想中，厄里亞(拉三 1、23)和那位先知(申十八 15、18)都被瞭解為帶來默西亞的救援人物。若翰的見證反映出很深的基督信仰的影響。歷史中的洗者若翰可能真的在其宣講審判與救援的使命中，把自己瞭解為是厄里亞再現(谷一 6；瑪十一 11)，他引用依四十三的經文稱自己是「曠野裏呼喊者的聲音」(若一 23)。

**若翰的洗禮：** 在若望福音中，法利塞人一直是耶穌主要的對手，在宗教問題上他們是有競爭能力的。但福音的內容所反應的大概並非若翰當時的情形，而是主曆 70 年以後的情況。在那一年，羅馬軍隊徹底地摧毀了耶路撒冷城，法利塞人是唯一存活下來的猶太宗教團體，因而成為重建以及延續猶太宗教命脈的主要力量。他們對質問若翰為什麼施洗，其問題本身預設了默西亞性的意義(若一 25)。在若翰的回答中，沒有提到人們所期待的「聖神的洗禮」(若一 33)，因此，若翰的洗禮顯示出只是「水洗」，而且若翰也因此而聞名於當時。若翰的見證指出，應該「被期待的那一位」已經來到人們中間了，但猶太人卻不認識祂。這一句關於默西亞信仰的斷言，含有一個恫嚇的意味，他指出當時的猶太人都是盲目的。而若翰表明自己完全不能和「在他以後來的那一位」相提並論，連替祂解鞋帶也當不起！這說明默西亞超越一切，若翰自認為連做祂的奴僕也不配。

### 綜合

這段福音的重點是「見證」！作證者清楚知道自己在說什麼，信仰永遠只能透過見證而被喚起。洗者若翰是一個善盡職責的模範見證人，他面對一群自以為擁有鑑別一切見證的標準、而且反對他的強權勢力，絲毫不畏懼退縮。

聖奧斯定說這些猶太當權人士：「他們期望將要來臨的(默西亞)，卻排斥眼前的這一位(見證者)。」洗者若翰給一切基督徒立下榜樣：基督徒必須為主作證，不可畏懼反對的勢力，信仰必須永遠具有挑戰及接受挑戰的能力。