

Personal Notes
061217 Third Sunday of Advent 9C
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Rejoice with responsibility is the theme for this Sunday. Philippians 4:4-7 begins with the imperative to rejoice. Luke continues with John the Baptizer with the imperative of acting responsibly toward his role in the greater plan of announcing the Good News to all humanity.

Philippians 4:6 says to be free of *all* anxiety. Philippians also tells how to do it, namely by asking God for whatever is making one anxious. There used to be a priest at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, in Newport News, Virginia, who modified *anxiety* in the canon of the Mass. He prayed to be free of *useless* anxiety. Philippians 4:6 says no such thing.

The Greek for *anxious* leaves no way out. The Greek means *not to think about*. Philippians is in tension with John the Baptizer. The tension is between not thinking too much in Philippians and thinking seriously about how to live with John the Baptizer.

John the Baptizer acts responsibly. The preaching Luke attributes to the Baptizer describes the spiritual life with concrete instances of how to act. The Gospel of Luke is explaining the spiritual life, as explained below.

Spiritual Landscape: Images of the Spiritual Life in the Gospel of Luke, by James L. Resseguie, postulates three activities. The first describes the spiritual life as a journey to the kingdom of God. The second grounds the spiritual life in everyday material reality, like the Nativity. Rejoice. The third is to discern the will of God. That discernment is the subject of Luke 3:10-18.¹

Luke 3:16 agrees with the other Evangelists, that John the Baptist said that he was not worthy to untie the sandal of Jesus.² Luke differs with the others by placing the baptism of Jesus in the background to what the Baptizer preached, as in Luke 3:10-18. The reason Luke lowers John is to elevate his cousin, Jesus, the cause for Advent rejoicing.³ The anticipation of the birth of Jesus, Messiah, Savior of Humanity, Christ the Lord, King of Kings is reason to rejoice. The ultimate

¹ Robert F. O'Toole, S.J., review of James L. Resseguie, Spiritual Landscape: Images of the Spiritual Life in the Gospel of Luke in Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 711-712.

² Robert H. Stein, "The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July 1992) 488-489.

³ Richard J. Dillon, "The Benedictus in Micro- and Macrocontext," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 3 (July 2006) 477-478.

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responsibility of the Faithful is to love the baby Jesus and follow the preaching of the adult Jesus.

The thought for this Sunday is to rejoice responsibly, with a concern for the less fortunate, with whom Jesus identifies.⁴

In the last three years, I indexed nothing for the first two of these readings. This is the first time I omitted commenting on all four passages. For more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes

⁴ Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Let My People Go! Threads of Exodus in African American Narratives," in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 125-126.