

The Faith of Our Fathers

This is the kind of King Christ is: He desires to help poor wretched people in body and in soul. Apart from Him, the world with all its strength and methods is no help. This is good and happy news! For Our Lord's help is this: Christ pays for our sin, and through His suffering He redeems us from eternal death. It is His kingdom and His ministry to preach this Gospel to poor sinners. That is His goal. For to the great and holy He does not come, for they do not desire His Gospel. (Bl. Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

How might Jesus offend St. John the Baptizer? For He tells St. John's disciples, "Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." Now "offend" does not mean to hurt St. John's feelings. Instead, Jesus is saying "Blessed are those who do not lose hope, who are not tempted to doubt Me, because of My suffering." All suffering is fulfilled in Christ Himself, and His Cross is a offense to many (1 Cor. 1.23). So anyone who suffers for Christ's sake may be offended; that is, they may lose heart. To them—and to St. John especially—Jesus pronounces this blessing: "Blessed are those to whom My Cross, Death, and Burial, will offer no trial of faith." (St. Hilary) ❧❧❧

Today's Gospel teaches us two excellent things. First, Christ is a King of grace, full of comfort. Through His gospel He encourages the distressed conscience, comforts those who have sinned, and wants to help them obtain eternal life. To the extent that we lock ourselves into this Word, we can say with complete confidence when we die, "I believe in Jesus Christ who through his death can and will save me, who gives sight to the blind, cleansing to the lepers and life to the dead. On him I rely and am saved." Second, though all the world is offended, angered and finally falls because of Him and His gospel, we pay no attention to their offense and falling, but rather accept this King without offense, cling to His Word and through Him gain eternal life. As He says, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

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When the Lord heard John's question, he related the miracles accomplished by his power, and referred to the degradation of His death: The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence at me. No one who had seen so many signs and such power could have taken offence. He could only have marveled. The unbelievers took serious offence at Him when after so many miracles they saw Him dying. And so Paul says: We preach Christ crucified, an offense to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles. It seemed foolish to people that the Author of life should die on behalf of human beings and humans saw Him as an offence when they should rather have considered themselves in His debt. We ought to honor God more worthily in proportion to the unworthy things He sustained on our behalf. (Gregory the Great) ❧❧❧

You are the coming One, O Jesus! We look for no other. We were blind, You have enlightened us. We were lame, You made us walk. The leprosy of sin disfigured us, You healed us. We were deaf to Your words, You made us hear. We were poor and had no one to care for us, You come to us with every aid and consolation. These are the blessings of Your visit to our souls, O Jesus! A visit, silent but wonderful in its work, which flesh and blood cannot understand, but which faithful hearts feel. Come my Savior, come to me. Your condescension and Your familiarity with my poverty of heart and soul, shall not scandalize me. Your workings in the souls of men are proof enough that You are God. He alone, that created souls, can heal them. (Gueranger) ❧❧❧

For *Gaudete*, the *Third Sunday in Advent*. These excerpts are intended as meditative pieces for the Day's pericopes. They have been edited and abridged for style, sense and space.

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