

2. July 2024

God exults for His people

NOTE: According to the traditional calendar, today is the Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary.

Zeph 3:14-18

Reading for the Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary

*Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;
shout, O Israel!*

*Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!*

*The Lord has taken away the judgments against you,
he has cast out your enemies.*

*The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear evil no more.*

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

*“Do not fear, O Zion;
let not your hands grow weak.*

*The Lord your God is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you[a] in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.*

*“I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it”.*

In both the Reading and the Gospel of this feast we hear wonderful hymns of praise, singing the grace and light that comes to us from the Saviour.

But a distinction must be made: Scripture speaks of the full truth of the objective event. But this does not mean that all this truth has already reached the souls of men, or that it has already penetrated all human realities. Only when faith is accepted can these words be realised in their fullness, and in this light it can be seen and understood that the Lord has reversed the sentence against Zion. In this case, Zion refers not only to the people

of Israel, but to the whole of humanity, for whom salvation has been prepared. If we accept faith and live according to it, we escape judgement, because the Lord has cancelled our debt and we have been set free (cf. Col 2:14).

Today's reading describes in beautiful words how God Himself rejoices to accomplish this work in His people. His greatest desire is to offer us the gift of salvation. Not only do we rejoice, but the Lord Himself rejoices when we accept His grace.

Can we believe it, can we feel it in ourselves? God rejoices over us and in a special way over our conversion!

This is not the only passage of Scripture that testifies to this. Jesus also wants to make us understand again and again what joy there is in heaven for those who are converted (Lk 15:7).

In the Gospel of this Feast of the Visitation, we hear the Magnificat, Mary's song of joy at the grace she has received. Her joy is kindled by God's joy in her for having responded to His call. And to better understand the meaning of today's biblical texts, we must not forget that in heaven, when we are with God, we will live in unceasing joy. All that we see and recognise of God's love and wisdom will increase our joy and gratitude, and we will praise the Lord without ceasing, together with all the angels and the blessed.

It is this joy that is expressed in the words of today's readings. In fact, it is thanks to the redemption which Christ achieved for us that we can fulfil the conditions for sharing in this unceasing joy of eternal life. Thus, in the person of Christ, God's mercy and joy come to us, because Jesus reveals to us the way to reach Him.

It is from this joy that we can understand today's biblical readings, even if their promises have not yet been fully realised before our eyes. God has renewed His love for His people and revealed it to all peoples.

In Mary we see the daughter of Zion, the one who believed in the Lord, the one who accepted His love in a special way and said her YES on behalf of all humanity.

In Mary we see the New Zion, reconciled and united with God. This is the will of God! This is what we can live in faith! This is what we must proclaim for the joy of God and humanity!