

Today's first two readings exhort us to rejoice. And the reason is, as the first reading says twice, "the Lord is in your midst." And therefore, "you have no further misfortune to fear." And again the author writes "Fear not, be not discouraged."

The Lord **IS** in our midst, fear not. The greater our trust in the Lord, the less should be (will be) our fear of whatever may befall us.

Even Paul in his letter after telling us to rejoice in the Lord writes "Have no anxiety at all..." for if our trust in the Lord is strong and ever active "Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

The Gospel is all about John the Baptist and how "...he preached the good news to all people." The good news included repentance and an awareness of the presence of the Messiah. The crowds were imagining that he was the Messiah. But John said "...One mightier than I is coming." And "He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire."

We might understand the Messiah will send the Holy Spirit to guide and enlighten us on our life journey, but what does he mean when he says that "He will baptize with ... fire"? Perhaps, it means that in our life journey we will all experience the fire of temptations, difficulties, disappointments, as well as sickness and tragedies. No matter how raging the fire, how stressful the situations we may experience, we should always remember the words written above "Fear not, be not discouraged." "Have no anxiety at all."

That attitude is never easy to achieve. It can only be approached by complete and active Trust in the Lord.

Go through the Gospels and see how often the Lord kept saying "Be not afraid." Let's take His word for it and Trust in the Lord for His great love never ends.