

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – December 13, 2020

WEEK 3 MESSAGE:

The Promise of Advent – Joy!

Reading 1: IS 61:1-2A, 10-11

Reading 2: 1 THES 5:16-24

Gospel: JN 1:6-8, 19-28



Gospel for the Third Sunday of Advent

A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.
And this is the testimony of John.
When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests
and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it,
but admitted, "I am not the Christ."
So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?"
And he said, "I am not."
"Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him,
"Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us?"
What do you have to say for yourself?" He said:
"I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'"
as Isaiah the prophet said."
Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him,
"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?"
John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not
recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie."
This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Advent Message Introduction

Journey with us for our December message series titled The Promise of Christmas – past, present and future. The prophesy of Isaiah will be fulfilled. Mary's yes will set into motion God's plan to save the world. The child born in a manger will become the king on the cross.

Gaudete Sunday is always celebrated on the third week of Advent. The day takes its name from the Latin word for *Rejoice!* based on the idea that our joy increases the closer we get to Christmas, or rather, the closer we get to Christ, and the fulfillment of the promise.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS & QUESTIONS

All our readings this week point to joy – and the attitude and actions we must take to hold on to it. Isaiah expresses a fitting motto. “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul.” St. Paul reminds us to rejoice always through prayer. And in the Gospel we see our common vocation with John the Baptist – to testify to the light, to be hope in the world.

This “Covid” year, more than any other in our lives, joy may seem elusive. We may need to remind ourselves that when God is the source of our joy, it cannot be taken away from us. Pursue joy.

- **Do you rejoice often?** What’s the difference between happiness and joy to believers?
- **St. Paul reminds us that gladness of heart come through prayer and thanksgiving. How often do you pray – and when you do, do you render with equal measure thanks, requests...or perhaps complaint? Are you generally a grateful person? Do you know anyone who is?**
- **Sooner or later, we are all going to have to answer the same question put before John the Baptist? WHO ARE YOU? Does your answer change depending on who you talk to?**

LIVING THE GOSPEL – Choose joy!

In our pursuit of joy, what gets in the way? What steals your joy? Here are a few common things that can rob us of joy:

- Self-pity. (Poor me”).
- Envy. (If we are always looking to see what others have)
- Negative attitude. (Are there fewer presents this year - or more precious ones?) ,
- Cynicism.
- Unforgiving heart.

In your pursuit of joy, in the days leading up to Christmas, perhaps try 1 or 2 steps:

- *Choose joy by beginning in prayer.* If it is not already your habit make it your habit to pray, even just 5 or 6 minutes a day, each day between now and Christmas. Pray in gratitude!
- *Choose joy by enjoying the people in your life.* Focus on their good qualities and what you like about them. Remember the best; forget the rest. Don’t demand your way. Be adaptable.
- *Choose joy, by not taking yourself too seriously.* Don’t rush. Laugh at yourself. The world is full of reason to be downcast. Don’t dwell on disappointments.

LAUDATO SI’ CONNECTIONS

There is great wisdom from Pope Francis about the attitude and the action necessary in our pursuit of joy. Sections 222-227 is titled Peace and Joy (which go hand in hand).

p222. Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and **encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption.** To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. **Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.** It is a return to that simplicity

223. Such sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating. **It is not a lesser life, or one lived with less intensity. On the contrary, it is a way of living life to the full.** In reality, those who enjoy more and live better each moment are those who have given up dipping here and there, always on the look-out for what they do not have. **They experience what it means to appreciate each person and each thing, learning familiarity with the simplest things and how to enjoy them.**