

Advent III Sunday: Dec 13 Zeph. 3:14-18a; Phil. 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent called **Gaudete Sunday**, which comes the Latin means to **REJOICE**. We lighted the rose candle of the Advent wreath, and the priest wears rose vestments to express our communal joy in the coming of Jesus, as our Savior. The theme of the third Sunday of Advent is *rejoicing in hope*. Advent is a time for joy, not because we are anticipating the anniversary of the birth of Jesus, but because God is already in our midst. In today's first reading, the prophet Zephaniah says, "*Shout for joy, O Zion ! Sing joyfully, O Israel* " Zephaniah made this prophetic proclamation at the height of the Jewish exile when things appeared hopeless and unbearable. St. Paul echoes the same message of joy in the second reading from Philippians: "*Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice... The Lord is in your midst... Fear not... be not discouraged... The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all...*" Paul was in prison when he made this appeal for rejoicing. In the gospel today, John the Baptist explains the secret of Christian joy as wholehearted commitment to God's way by doing His will. A sad Christian is a contradiction in terms. According to the Baptizer, happiness comes from doing our duties faithfully, doing good to others and sharing our blessings with others. The people asked John, "*What should we do?*" He told them to act with justice, charity and honesty, letting their lives reflect their transformation. For us, that transformation occurs when Christ enters our daily lives.

What should we do in preparation for Christmas? This is the same question the Jews asked John. His answer, to them and to us, is the same: repent and reform your lives, and prayerfully wait for the Messiah. Our Blessed Mother, in her many apparitions, urgently calls us to more fervent prayer. Let us remember that the Mass is the most powerful of prayers. We must be a Eucharistic people, living and experiencing the presence of Jesus in our hearts. Let us remember that conversion is through Jesus, whom we encounter in the sacraments. Let us forgive those who offend us and pray for them. Finally, let us share our love with others as selfless and humble service. "Do small things but with great love" (Mother Teresa).

As Christmas, the feast of joy, comes nearer, everybody is busy preparing for the great day. We all spend a great deal of time, energy, and finance in preparing for the secular celebration of Christmas, and there is nothing wrong in that, as long as we don't lose sight of the real meaning of Christmas - the spiritual preparation and celebration of the coming of Christ. Jesus Christ is the gift of salvation to all people; to all who are willing to receive him. So let us prepare our hearts to recognize Him and welcome Him on our lives.