

Third Sunday of Advent

An Elderly woman walked into the local country church. The friendly usher greeted her at the door and helped her up the flight of steps.

"Where would you like to sit?", he asked politely. "The front row, please," she answered.

"You really don't want to do that", the usher said, "the preacher is really boring."

"Do you happen to know who I am?", the woman inquired. "No," he said. "I am the preacher's mother," she replied indignantly.

"Do you know who I am?", he asked. "No", she said. "Good," he answered and quickly walked away.

Dear Friends,

This Sunday is called Gaudete Sunday, or rejoice Sunday which brings joy of the season to us. Different colors, readings, and everything bring us joy. All the prayers and readings help us to pray in the theme of rejoicing.

St. Paul in the second reading tells us to Rejoice always. How can we be joyful, or feel joyful always? Is it possible to be joyful always?

Through her ministry in Jesus' name, Mother Teresa brought untold blessings and joy to the poor who lay unattended and forgotten on our streets. When asked the source of her joy, Mother Teresa replied: "Joy is prayer — joy is strength — joy is love — joy is a net of love. . . A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love . . . loving as He loves, helping as He helps, giving as He gives, serving as He serves, rescuing as He rescues, being with Him twenty-four hours, touching Him in His distressing disguise." (Malcolm Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God*, Harper and Row, San Francisco: 1971).

This is the lesson we learn in the first reading from the book of Isaiah. Bringing Joy and peace is the main mission of Jesus. He read the same passage in the synagogue and said that it was fulfilled in them (Luke 4:26-30) this is the good news given by prophet Isaiah after the exile of Babylon. Real joy and comfort came to them when they settled back in their homeland.

St. Paul says three things to be joyful: 1. As St. Thomas Aquinas says," Joy is caused by love. "When we experience God's love for us, we grow in love for him and this exchange of love produces joy. So let us love God and love one another. It is a multi-dimensional act that brings joy.

Let me share one of the stories titled: 'The Lady Trying to Find Happiness'.

This story is about a beautiful, wealthy lady who felt that her whole life was empty; it had no meaning. So, the lady went to visit a counselor to seek out ways to be happy. The counselor called over to the old lady who was cleaning the office floors. The counselor

told the rich lady, "I'm going to ask Mary here to tell you how she found happiness. All I want you to do is listen to her."

The old lady put down her broom and sat on a chair opposite to the rich lady and told her story: "Well, my husband died of malaria and three months later my only son was killed in an accident. I had nobody. I had nothing left. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, I never smiled at anyone, I even thought of taking my own life. Then, one evening, when I was returning from work, a little kitten followed me home. Somehow, I felt sorry for that kitten. It was cold outside, so I decided to let the kitten in. I got some milk, and the kitten licked the plate clean. Then it purred and rubbed against my leg and, for the first time in months, I smiled. Then I stopped to think, if helping a little kitten could make me smile, maybe doing something for people could make me happy. So, the next day, I prepared some food and took it to a neighbor who was sick and confined to bed. Every day I tried to do something nice for someone. It made me so happy to see them happy. Today, I don't know of anybody who sleeps and eats better than I do. I've found happiness by giving it to others."

When the rich lady heard this, she cried. She had everything that money could buy, but she had lost the things which money cannot buy. "The beauty of life does not depend on how happy you are; but on how happy others can be because of you..."

Secondly, being grateful in all circumstances. I have seen some people say that they are grateful for who they are and what they have.

John the Baptist comes in here showing his gratefulness as being a way and a witness for the Messiah. There are two questions that needed little answers. Why baptism of repentance? Why do Pharisees ask John, "Who are you?"

First of all, Baptism started among Jews once they came from Babylonian exile. That practice has been adopted by other communities like Essenes. It is a form of purification as we see in different religions even today. John asked everyone to repent to bring joy in their lives. (Luke, 15th chapter).

In Matthew 11:14, Jesus says John as Elijah. That's why the Pharisees want to know who he was and he clarifies that very well about it in the Gospel today.

Are we Joyful today?