

Third Sunday of Advent

A man was sleeping in church. The pastor became annoyed and said, "Who wants to go to heaven?" Everyone stood up. The man slept on. The pastor then said, "Who wants to go to hell?" Everyone sat down so fast it woke the man up. He stood up and said "Pastor, I don't know what we are voting for, but it looks like me and you are the only ones in favor of it."

Dear Friends,

The Third Sunday of Advent is called, "Gaudete Sunday or Rejoice Sunday. It is a reminder of the joyous celebration of Christmas. Today we light the rose candle of the Advent wreath, and the clergy may wear rose vestments, to express our communal joy in the coming of Jesus as our Savior. We rejoice because: a) we are celebrating the day of Christ's birth, b) we recognize his daily presence in our midst, and c) we wait for His return in glory. The readings and songs are set out to remind us of Joy.

Zephaniah, in the first reading, proclaims a message of hope and rejoicing to the people of Israel. Despite their trials, the prophet reminds them that God is in their midst, a mighty savior who renews them in His love. This passage encourages us to trust in God's abiding presence, especially during difficult times.

St. Paul, writing to the Philippians from prison, urges them to "*rejoice in the Lord always.*" His words remind us that Christian joy is not dependent on external circumstances but on our relationship with God. This joy comes from the assurance of God's peace, which surpasses all understanding.

In the Gospel, John the Baptist gives the realistic way to be joyful. Today's Gospel has two sections. He gives counsel to the people on making their lives Joyful. That is why when different groups of people came, he advised them to do the just things in life and in their profession. He emphasizes three things: sharing, not overdoing and not misjudging. In other words, being faithful to one's responsibilities and integrity in one's state of life.

Secondly, John the Baptist clarifies his fidelity to his responsibility. When people were filled with expectation, they were wondering whether he would be the Christ. He told them he was not. He had the real joy in telling them the truth of Jesus Christ who is to come. He knew his limits, and at the same time, his responsibilities. One of the scholars would say, "If you want to be successful, you know your limits." John's dealing with the people was asking them to be generous, kind, share with the needy, and to be compassionate.

What are the sources of true joy in our lives?

Let us think about how we can give something to someone in need and make their lives happy, which will bring joy into our lives.