

Homily of Third Sunday of Advent Year C 2021

Zephaniah 3:14-18; Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

On this third Sunday of Advent, we light the pink candle which is called "Candle of Joy." The third Sunday of Advent is called *Gaudate* Sunday. *Gaudate* is the Latin word for rejoice. The antiphon of the Mass taken from the second reading of today's Mass is, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). Latin: *Gaudate in Domino semper; interim dico, gaudate*. From the antiphon to the second reading, the words 'joy' and 'rejoice' appear twelve times. Yes, in the middle of so much troubles in personal lives, in families, in our country, and in the world; we are invited to pray for the joy of the Lord that is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

The first reading is a prophecy of Prophet Zephaniah to the people of Israel when infidelity to God was very high. The worship of God was at a very low level. However, there was a remnant who remained faithful. The prophecy was of hope and encouragement to the remnant faithful.

Nehemiah prophesied, "The Lord has removed the judgment against you, he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, Zion, do not be discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior, who will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love... (Zephaniah 3:15-17).

There are many desolate people who are going through various kinds of crises that stifle joy in their life and leave them sad a lot of time. May the prophecy of Zephaniah come to fulfillment in their lives. May they no longer be afraid or discouraged. May they be renewed in God's love. May God, in his infinite mercy, replace their sadness with joy. May God remove the judgement upon those who suffer injustice and turn away their enemies. May they shout for joy, and sing joyfully to God. May they exult with all their heart.

In times of crises and desolation, let us keep faith, and remain close to God. The psalmist says, "God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in distress. Thus we do not fear, though earth be shaken and mountains quake to the depths of the sea, though its waters rage and foam and mountains totter at its surging." (Psalm 46:2-4). As we remain close to God, St. Paul prays for us in the second reading, "Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard [our] hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Our reflection on the importance of spiritual preparation for Christmas continues today. The Advent season offers us three major spiritual invitations: (1) invitation to prayer, (2) invitation to repentance, (3) invitation to charity.

St. Paul highlights the invitation to prayer in the second reading. He says, "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make requests known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

In the Gospel, John the Baptist emphasizes invitation to repentance and invitation to charity.

John the Baptist said to the crowd, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." To tax collectors, John the Baptist said, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." And to soldiers, he said "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages" (Luke 3:11-14).

We are the crowd John the Baptist invites to help, support and be charitable to those in need. Our acts of charity make us instruments of joy to others. We are the tax collectors John invites to repent from dishonesty and greed. We are the soldiers John invites to be self-content and not bear false witness or accuse anyone falsely.

As our Advent journey continues, may we experience the transforming graces of the sacred season of God's favor; so that we will have a Spirit-filled commemoration of the birth of Christ. Amen.

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