

Homily of Third Sunday of Advent Year C

We light the pink candle today, the third Sunday of Advent. The pink candle is called “Candle of Joy.” Our lighting the candle is our prayer that God may replace our sadness with joy.

The third Sunday of Advent is called *Gaudate* Sunday. *Gaudate* is the Latin word for rejoice. From the antiphon to the second reading of the third Sunday of Advent the words ‘joy’ and ‘rejoice’ appear twelve times interchangeably. One can, rightly, call the third Sunday of Advent “Baby Jesus Shower Sunday” since we are in the mood of joyful anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ.

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 to the worship of God. The prophecy was a prophecy of hope and encouragement to the remnant faithful.

There are many desolate people who are going through various kinds of crises that stifle joy in their life and leave them sad most times. May the prophecy of Zephaniah come to fulfillment in their lives. May God, in his infinite mercy, replace their sadness with joy. May God remove the judgement against them, and turn away their enemies. May they no longer be afraid or discouraged. May they be renewed in God’s love. 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, “To be near God is my happiness” (Psalm 73:28). 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.”

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.” This is an invitation to charity. We are the crowds. John the Baptist invites us to help, support and be charitable to those in need. Our acts of charity make us instruments of joy to others.

John the Baptist said to tax collectors, “Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.” This is an invitation to repentance. We are the tax collectors. John the Baptist invites us to repent from dishonesty and greed.

John the Baptist said to the soldiers, “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.” This is an invitation to repentance. We are the soldiers. John the Baptist invites us to be self-content and not bear false witness or accuse anyone falsely.

As our Advent journey continues and as we approach the celebration of Christmas, may the joy of the Lord be our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP