

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings on this third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, a day of joy and rejoicing as we draw closer to the coming of Christ, both in His second coming and in remembrance of his birth. During the season of Advent, we prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's coming through prayer, penance, sacrifices, and the act of good works. This week however, we also rejoice! The term "gaudete" comes from the opening antiphon for today's Mass, "Gaudete in Domino semper," translated from Latin as "Rejoice in the Lord always." (Philippians 4:4).

In today's Mass readings we hear of much joy and rejoicing that is to come through the Lord. In fact, throughout Advent we hear a lot from the Prophet Isaiah, and all throughout his readings and prophecies, we are inundated with examples of joy, hope, and rejoicing. Today's first reading expresses that the deserts and parched lands will soon flourish and bloom, and then songs of joy and rejoicing shall come from the people for they will see the splendor, glory, and strength of their God, for He is coming, as Isaiah explains, to save "you," to save his people, to save us. Isaiah promises that all bad things will one day cease, mourning and sorrow will flee, and that one day, the people of God will be "crowned" with everlasting joy. (Is. 1-6A,10).

So why do we hear from Isaiah so much during Advent? Why are we so focused on joy and rejoicing this week? Because the world was, and is, in need of saving. The ancient Israelites were in need of a savior, and Isaiah was proclaiming to the people that the Savior was soon coming. Christ came to save His people, He incarnated and was born on Christmas, he grew up, ministered to His people, spoke of the love and mercy of God, was eventually crucified, died, and was buried. For many, Christ's crucifixion and death was the moment that all hope, joy, and rejoicing were lost. Many could not understand how the Messiah, the Christ, could be killed. We know however, that this was not the end or the ceasing of our rejoicing, for Christ conquered death through the victory of His resurrection. Christ fulfilled the prophecies and promises from scripture. He was the Truth, the Way, and the Life, the true and long awaited Savior.

Imagine people of ancient Israel; imagine the feelings of living in complete darkness, oppression, and strife. Imagine their longing and hoping for someone to come and save them, as God had promised. Then imagine Isaiah and his writings, his message of a savior to come, and the joy that it brought to the people of God. The hope, the joy, and the rejoicing of the Good News of the Messiah who was to come, should be and is for many of us the same hope, joy, and rejoicing that we feel, that we experience, and that we profess through the promises of Christ and in his victory over death. As faithful disciples of Christ we aim to live virtuous lives, to develop a relationship with God, to spread the Good News, and to love and show kindness and mercy, as God our Father has shown us. We aim to be with God in Heaven one day, where all mourning and sorrows will flee, and where through Christ we will be "crowned" with everlasting joy.

As we do during the Advent season, we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ, and until then, we live with joy and rejoicing in our hearts until Christ comes again or until he calls us home to his heavenly kingdom.

May you all have a blessed and joyous Advent and Christmas. God Bless.

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