

13 December 2020



GAUDETE SUNDAY 2020

A REFLECTION FROM LINDA

Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-end; 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24; John 1.6-8, 19-28

Today the third Sunday of Advent is also known and marked in some churches as Gaudete Sunday, the day takes its name from the Latin word Gaudete ("Rejoice"), the first word of the introduction to the liturgy of the mass that would have been used way back.



What does it mean to rejoice - to show, express, feel, joy, contentment?

Today when the days are dark and dull, its cold, we have a lot still to do to get ready for Christmas, as we feel sad that we cannot sing, sit with our friends, have coffee after church, as we are in tier two, as we have to socially distance are we rejoicing? It's hard isn't it?

Do we rejoice in COVID?

Do we rejoice in economic crisis?

Do we rejoice that so many people are having a bad time at the moment?

No of course we don't,

In our Gospel reading we have John the Baptist testifying to the light, Jesus the light of all mankind, the light that shines in the darkness.

John the Baptist is preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah, the one to whom Isaiah was pointing, the one who is to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberation to the captives, and release the prisoners, to comfort those who mourn.

Isaiah continues: -

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my whole being shall exult in my God for he has clothed me with garments of salvation

In the New Testament reading for today from Thessalonians, Paul writes we are to *rejoice, always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances*. In Philipians, Paul writes *rejoice in the Lord and I say it again rejoice*.

We are to rejoice **in the** Lord, to rejoice in what God has already done through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We are to rejoice and be thankful for what Jesus has done in our lives, and what he will continue to do. We are to rejoice and be thankful that one day we will be with God forever in that place where he will

wipe away every tear, where there will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away.

The theologian Henri Nouwen described the difference between joy and happiness. While happiness is dependent on external conditions, joy is *"the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing – sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death - can take that love away."* Thus, joy can be present even in the midst of sadness, in the midst of COVID-19.

Through her ministry in Jesus' name, Mother Teresa brought untold blessings and joy to the poor who lay unattended and forgotten on the 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."*

Joy is found in the lord, in his love, in his presence, in his service.

This joy in the Lord which we must aim for is not a superficial happiness based on circumstances or on the absence of trials, but rather is a solid, abiding contentment and hope that is as steady and certain as our faithful God who has given us His promises in His Word. Our Lord Jesus knew that joy even as He faced the cross. The apostles knew that joy when they were flogged for preaching the gospel, and they went on their way "rejoicing. We can know it too.

So, this Advent we rejoice that there is a voice calling in the wilderness, there is comfort, there is joy, to be found in the light of Christ who is coming into the world.

People of God:
Be glad!
Your God delights in you.
He will give you joy for
sadness
and turn the dark to light.
Be strong in hope therefore;
for your God comes to save.
You are God's children
Lord make us one in the love
of Christ
today and for ever. Amen.

