

Third Sunday of Advent

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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Today, we celebrate *Gaudete Sunday* - the Sunday of rejoicing.

In the midst of Advent's quiet waiting, this day breaks forth like a gentle dawn, reminding us that joy is already near. We rejoice not because all is perfect, but because the Lord is coming; and His impending arrival fills our waiting with hope. The Readings this Sunday is woven together with one golden thread – patience; a patient heart that trusts, endures, and hopes in God.

In the First Reading, Isaiah speaks to a people crushed by fear and uncertainty. The Assyrian invasions, especially the campaign of Sennacherib, had left the Israelites feeling vulnerable and abandoned. Yet into this bleakness, Isaiah proclaims an astonishing promise: “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.” In other words: *Hold on! God is on the way.* Isaiah paints a breathtaking vision: *the desert will bloom, the weak will be strengthened, the blind will see, the lame will leap for joy, and barren places will become places of beauty.* Isaiah affirms that patient waiting is never wasted when God is the One we wait for. Even when nothing seems to be changing, God is quietly and faithfully preparing restoration.

St. James, in the Second Reading, picks up on this same theme. He urges the early Christians, and us, to make our hearts firm as we wait for the Lord's coming. Just as a farmer waits for the harvest with steady endurance, trusting that the rains will come, so the believer waits with a steady soul grounded in faith. Patience, James tells us, is not passive. It is courageous. It is a strength. It is faith stretched wide and deep.

Then, in the Gospel, we find that even the great prophet, John the Baptist, struggled with impatience. From prison he sends messengers to Jesus asking: “Are



you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” This is the cry of a tired heart; a heart that has hoped but has not yet seen. Jesus responds not with a rebuke, but patiently response to the situation with signs, proclaiming: *the blind see, the poor receive good news, and the dead are raised*. He then adds a blessing that reaches into our own hearts today: “Blessed is the one who takes no offence at me.” Meaning: blessed is the one who trusts Me even when I move slowly, gently, or mysteriously. That was the essence of Jesus’ answer. Blessed is the one who remains patient.

We all know that impatience steals peace from our souls. I once came across a remark that I thought was humorous. An obese person lamented: “I wish I were as thin as my patience.” Of course, we know that in order to reduce one’s body weight and improving one’s physical fitness requires exercise. Likewise, spiritual fitness requires exercise, too: the exercise of patience. Saint Augustine beautifully reminds us: “Patience is the companion of wisdom.”

In Scripture, patience is not resignation, it is active endurance rooted in faith; a deliberate choice to trust that God’s timing is always perfect. It is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that St. Paul names in Galatians 5.22: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

As we draw nearer to Christmas, the day when Heaven came down in the form of a tiny Child, let us ask Jesus for the beautiful virtue of patience. When we practice patience, we carry Christ to others. We become bearers of peace, sowers of joy, and gentle reflections of the Child of Bethlehem.

Rejoice! The Lord is near.