

3rd Sunday of Advent

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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Rejoice! Rejoice!

Gaudēte, gaudēte!

Rejoice, rejoice!

Christus est natus

Christ is born

Ex Maria virgine, gaudēte!

Of the Virgin Mary-Rejoice

The Third Week of Advent is a week of Rejoicing and Joy. Today is the Sunday of Joy, bringing out thoughts of joyful anticipation for the joy that Immanuel brings. This week invites believers to rejoice as Christmas draws nearer.

The Third Candle that we lit today, the pink candle, the Candle of Joy, is also called the Shepherd's Candle or Gaudate Candle. This represents the joy felt at the birth of our Lord, as well as the joy of the anticipation of His Second Coming. The use of the rose or pink colour symbolizes a departure from the penitential purple colour, and adds a sense of celebration to the liturgy.

Gaudate is a Latin verb that means 'rejoice'. It is not just an expression of a simple state of happiness but rather the experience of joy that is everlasting. *Happiness* is more like a transient feeling, an emotion or pleasure derived from a specific event or circumstance that may be a feeling that is fleeting and momentary. The experience of Joy is a longer lasting state. Joy is deeper and radiates from the heart; it is a choice of life. For example, when we go for a picnic, we travel together, talk, have fun, eat and play, and it all gives us a momentary feeling of happiness and pleasure. But if we cherish the memories, and it keeps us alive and continues to always give us an enduring feeling, it is Joy.

St. Thomas Aquinas described the difference between joy and happiness in this manner: Happiness is the final end of Man, the eternal contemplation of God which is an act of the intellect. Joy, however, is itself not a virtue, but is an effect of the virtue of charity or



‘love’, which is full, if its object of contemplation is eternal and the greatest, i.e. God. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It helps to experience and to keep alive, always, the Divine Presence in us.

Today’s First Reading calls on Zion to rejoice because her King, her Lord, is coming to save her. Through the letter to the Philippians, St. Paul calls our attention to rejoice in the Lord. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” In order to have this experience of joy, John the Baptist urges us to ‘change our life’, to become more charitable, to love and to care for others, and to do only what is right and just.

Let us also ask ourselves the same question that they asked John the Baptist: “What must we do?”... to experience and to possess the real Joy that Christ gives.

All need is not happiness, attained through the fulfilment of our needs. Joy, true Joy comes from Love. And with St. Paul let us sing the hymn of Joy:

**“Rejoice in the Lord always
and again I say Rejoice...
Rejoice Rejoice
and again I say Rejoice....”**