

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.”

December 13, 2020

3rd Sunday of Advent – Gaudete Sunday (Yr B)

Is. 61:1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thess. 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19- 28

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Rejoice! Today is Gaudete Sunday – which means Rejoice Sunday! It’s called Rejoice Sunday because the word is repeated many times today. We hear it in the opening Antiphon from Paul’s letter to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.”

Rejoice is also at the heart of today’s 1st. reading from Isaiah: “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives.”

It continues: “I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice.”

Today we are being offered this message as a gift, even in the face of a devastating and heart-wrenching and menacing, global Pandemic. That is to say, that we are invited to rejoice in a God who wants to be the "joy of our souls" and who has clothed us in salvation and wrapped us with a cloak of justice. What an amazing image to think that we have a God who loves us so deeply that he enfolds us in the very salvation we need!!

This message is so heartwarming because we are the heartbroken, God has come to heal. We are the poor who are receiving the glad tidings, and we are the captives being offered liberty.

So, why aren't we rejoicing? We have this message of joy and hope from God, but we can be distracted, even in these trying times, by our own sense of isolation. Many things get in the way of our really receiving this good news, including our own sense of unworthiness - who are we to receive that kind of love? - we can surely say. But if we can really, really hear what Jesus is saying and wrap ourselves in that loving freedom, then the words of Isaiah, echoed by Jesus, give us a new sense of our own mission - the mission we have as baptized Christians. Now it is our job to not only accept that healing and love the Lord brings, but to bring glad tidings to the poor, heal the brokenhearted and proclaim liberty to captives.

Q= But how can we bring glad tidings when we know our own lives are a mess and those around us are suffering so greatly? Pope Francis has said that the real joy of a Christian comes not from what our lives are right now - but from what Jesus promised to us. Hence, be courageous in suffering, he said, and remember that after that suffering, the Lord will come. When the hardships are over, joy will come, after the dark comes the sun. Pope Francis

concluded by praying that God "give us all this joy in hope." And we have a blessed assurance given us by Christ himself saying: "All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11). Therefore, St. Paul encourages today to, "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks." For as miserable as life can seem at times, the reality is that God has clothed us "with a robe of salvation", that heals all our poverty, our heartbrokenness, and our bondage. Hence, even though in the troubled waters of life, you may not recognize him, "the one who calls you faithful". And so rejoice!!!