

3rd Sunday of Advent Scripture

Reflection by Father Dave -

At the beginning of the Gospel for this weekend, the people put a question to John the Baptist: “What must we do?” It doesn’t really make sense unless we remember what John was telling them, and us, earlier in the text. If we recall last Sunday’s Gospel passage, we remember that John was announcing the coming of the Lord. A path must be prepared for the One Who brings salvation. It is almost as if the people who heard John’s message wanted to know what it meant in practice: How do we smooth and straighten our lives into a welcoming highway for the Lord? Today we hear John’s answer. We can make our hearts ready to receive Christ by sharing what we have with those who have nothing, as well as by treating others with fairness and respect. Jesus will reveal God’s love to us. Our faith-response to that loving presence requires that we act according to the ways of justice and always with the greatest kindness and charity.

St Vincent de Paul, when talking with his confreres, would remind them of what true prayer, kindness and charity is all about. Many times they would complain to Vincent because their “prayer time” was being interrupted to answer the door and be greeted by someone in need. “It’s not fair that our prayers are always interrupted.” Vincent would remind them that the greater prayer was to put their hymnals down and to answer the door, responding in a spirit of charity and generosity to those in need. Prayer in Action! How often our schedules are interrupted. When interrupted, do we allow our nerves to get all frazzled – snapping at those around us – perhaps throwing a tantrum as if we were children? Regardless of the situation, regardless of the events that lead to a situation – the way in which we behave towards others is a measure of how deeply we have welcomed Christ into our hearts. But, as well as reflecting on what we do, we are also invited to think about the spirit in which we act. Because when we stop to think about it, whenever we cry out to God for our own personal needs or wants, doesn’t He take the time to patiently listen to us – even though He has the needs of the entire world on His shoulders? And shouldn’t we, then, show our gratitude to God by extending the same patience with others? The prophet Zephaniah, our first reading, speaks of the joy that proclaims God’s presence among us. St Paul invited his hearers always to be happy in the Lord. It is one thing to share what we have begrudgingly or out of duty; it is another thing completely to do so happily and joyfully.

The Season of Advent is a time of waiting in joyful hope. We are looking forward to celebrating the fulfillment of God’s promise. It is a time of thankfulness for God’s generous love, made real for us in Jesus. John the Baptist knew that this love was a free and undeserved gift. He was not even worthy enough to bend low and undo Christ’s sandals. We do not have to be worthy to welcome Jesus, but we do have to be willing to let His

presence change our attitudes and behavior. The Gospel shows us what this means in practice. In whatever shape it takes, genuine Christian generosity and kindness will always be expressed with happiness and joy. We rejoice in God’s gifts to us; let us also be joyful in happily sharing them with others.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World
& for Peace

Feasts for this week –

December 13 – St Lucy – was martyred in Syracuse, probably during the persecution of Diocletian (which started in the year 303). Devotion to her spread rapidly across practically the entire Church and her name is included in the Roman Canon of the Mass. According to legend, one day she went to the shrine of St Agatha in Catania with her mother, who suffered from uncontrolled bleeding. While praying at the shrine, Lucy’s mother was cured. Lucy decided to give up her worldly goods to serve the poor, she took a vow of virginity, and broke off her impending marriage to a young nobleman in order to give her life entirely to God. Her suitor was incensed at her action and accused her before the Roman consul of being a Christian who would not honor the laws of the Empire. Bravely confessing her faith, Lucy was sentenced to be tortured by fire and boiling oil.

December 14 – St John of the Cross – was born in Fontiveros, in Spain, about 1542. He spent some time as a Carmelite friar before, in 1568, St. Teresa of Avila persuaded him to pioneer the reform of the Carmelite order. This was a difficult task and a dangerous one: he suffered imprisonment and severe punishment at the hands of the Church authorities. He died at the monastery of Ubeda in Andalusia on December 14 1591. The monks, there, had initially treated him as the worst of sinners, but by the time he died they had recognized his sanctity and his funeral was the occasion of a great outburst of enthusiasm. His works include two major mystical poems – he is considered one of the great poets of the Spanish language – and detailed commentaries on them and the spiritual truths they convey.

BULLETIN REFLECTION by Father Rody

DEC. 12 2021...3RD SUN ADVENT GAUDETE
SUNDAY...LK 3, 10-18

GAUDETE IN DOMINO SEMPER

'Rejoice in the Lord always.' (Second Reading...Phil. 4, 4)

Father, how can you convince me to rejoice always in the Lord? Please look around, we are at a mess father because of this pandemic. Many died because of this covid thing and here we are with another variant. Poor countries have not reached the herd immunity. I can't do the things I used to do. I'm tired wearing face mask Father. Covid has taken so much from me father even with my faith I am starting to question my God. **Really father how am I to rejoice always in the Lord?**

I wish to answer this question in two ways...

FIRST WAY...Way back my school days on our subject 'counseling', our professor once did this activity...on his table he placed a glass and poured water (half only) into the glass. Then he raised the question 'what do you see?' Some of us said, '**half full...half empty.**' He said, '**based on the reality you saw**, all of you answered correctly but let us go further with your answers.'

-HALF FULL those who said this answer are **optimistic people**, for them there is still a chance to really fill the glass with water...the reality may not be as good as it should be but for this people they always tell to themselves 'we can still do something.'

-HALF EMPTY those who said this, on the other hand, are **pessimistic people**...the reality of being half empty has dominated their mindset, thus there is already a struggle for success...the reality has pushed them to give up 'there's nothing we can do now.'

SECOND WAY...Have you ever asked a mother who is about to give birth? We are 7 and I am the eldest among the 7. Our mother told us, '**IT IS PAINFUL TO GIVE BIRTH...IT IS LIKE YOUR ONE LEG IS ALREADY ON THE GRAVE BUT I STILL DECIDED TO SAY LET'S GO CALL THE MIDWIFE I CAN'T WAIT ANYMORE TO SEE MY BABY.**' All mothers are willing to face the danger of giving birth and despite the pain, upon seeing their baby and hearing the first cry of their baby---the smile the joy the happiness of all the mothers could never be encapsulated by any dictionary.

Using the two ways, there is always THE REASON to be happy and to rejoice despite the circumstances of life may be painful. By way of psychology, paradigm shift is the approach. By way of existential reality of giving birth, the baby is the reason. By way of theology, **Jesus Christ is THE REASON** for mankind to rejoice. Third Sunday of Advent known as 'Gaudete Sunday' tells us, 'mankind the reason is already in front of you and remember also **Jn. 15, 5...without me you can do nothing.**'

