

### **3RD SUND. ADVENT (B)**

#### **IN MY GOD IS THE JOY OF MY SOUL**

The prophet Isaiah talks about the Messiah who has been sent to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives. He rejoices in the Lord, and in his God is the joy of his soul. He is rejoicing because of what God has done for him. In a similar way, when Mary was expecting to give birth to the Saviour, She rejoiced in the Lord, because God had done great things for her. Mary reveals again what the Messiah is to accomplish; that is, to fill the hungry with good things and raise the lowly.

St. Paul tells the believers in Thessalonica to rejoice always, to pray constantly, to give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for them in Christ Jesus. So he reveals to them three important things which the Lord requires - to rejoice in Him, to pray, and to give thanks.

Today is known as Gaudate Sunday, a day of joy, because the coming of the Lord is close at hand. The promised Messiah will be born in a few days time. The children of God are to rejoice because the time to set the captives free and heal the brokenhearted is imminent. He is the light of the world John came to testify to.

The testimony of John should encourage us to wait patiently for the Lord, and rejoice greatly in Him. This is because, the Jews considered John as the Messiah because of his way of life and preaching, but he told them that he was just the voice, and the friend of the bridegroom, then the Messiah is great indeed and in Him one has to rejoice. John tells us how important Christ is. John told them that he did not deserve even to be the servant of the Christ they were waiting for.

What brings us joy, and in what do we rejoice? People rejoice when their favourite team wins; others when they receive a gift from a friend; students also find joy when their classwork and exams are excellent, and businessmen, when everything goes on well with business. Do these situations bring lasting joy? They bring joy to some extent. After some time something erodes all the joy experienced.

Isaiah would rejoice heartily in the Lord, and in God the joy of his soul; Mary rejoiced in God her Saviour. The good things we find difficult to do are the ones which bring us joy, but what we find it easy to do and we think will bring us peace and joy rather ends up causing us much pain and sadness. Good brings joy, while evil brings sadness. That is why in the second reading, St.

Paul is urging the believers to retain what is good and refrain from every kind of evil.

We are preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, but what we often hear is happy holidays, and not merry christmas. Peoples' minds are on the merry-making activities and not what brought about the holidays, the birth of the Saviour. Christmas has lost its spiritual meaning. Even before the celebrations start, cautions are sounded for those who are going to put on pounds of weight because of excessive eating and drinking. Is that the joy we are yearning for?

After the Christmas season the doctors will be very busy due to our way of life during the Christmas festivities. Is that what the Messiah expects from us when He comes? He wants us to obey His commandments and do what is right. He told His disciples, "If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete," (Jn. 15:10-11). Nothing will bring us complete joy other than the joy of Christ.

St. Ignatius of Loyola found lasting joy in reading about the life of Christ and the saints rather than reading secular books. Sex and drugs, food and drink, even human beings cannot bring us lasting joy and happiness. It is the one who baptizes with water and the Holy Spirit who can bring us lasting joy. Our world now is addicted to 'instant things' so much so that it is difficult to talk about waiting to experience the happiness that Christ will bring.

It is time for us to pray for the grace of God to be able to be patient and wait for the Lord as the farmer waits for the rains. "The end of all things is near, so keep your minds calm and sober for prayer," (1Pet. 4:7).