

Church of the Divine Love

Sermon third Sunday of Advent December 13th, 2020

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24; John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Dear people of God,

This Third Sunday of Advent is called “Rejoice Sunday” because over and over we hear: “Rejoice in the Lord always.” We rejoice because God is in our midst and God hears our prayers. God also rejoices in us and God renews us in love. Today’s Gospel tells us that John the Baptist came as a witness to testify to the light, who is Jesus. The coming of Jesus, the light into the world is a source of rejoicing because Jesus removes darkness from the world. We have seen that the first candle represents hope, and the second candle represents peace. Today we come to the third candle on the wreath.

Brothers and sisters, St. Paul says in the second reading, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus....May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.”

Let me share with you a meaningful story: A blind man went to visit his friend in the next village. It became nighttime and the blind man wanted to go back to his home. His friend gave the blind man a lighted lamp as he said goodbye to him. The blind man said, I don’t need this lamp, I will use my stick to find my way. The nights and day are similar to me. His friend said, Keep it with you. It is not for you, but for others. If you carry this lighted lamp with you, others can see it. Then they will not collide with you. The blind man started his journey carrying the lighted lamp with him. On the way, there was a storm. He waited under a tree and resumed his journey after the storm. Suddenly, a stranger coming in the opposite direction collided with him and both of them fell down on the ground. The blind man shouted, could not see you the lighted lamp in my hand? Are you blind? The stranger replied, I am not blind, but your lamp was not burning. The blind man said, I am sorry, I am blind, and I did not know that the flame was put out by the storm.

Let us consciously guard the lamp of God shining in our hearts. It will illuminate us and enlighten everyone around us. Let us remember the meaningful proverb that tells, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.” This proverb says that whenever we have some difficulty in our lives, we should try to overcome the difficulty rather than to curse the difficulty. In darkness, we cannot see any good things but by cursing the darkness, we will not get light; if we want to get light, we have to get up and light a candle. Jesus himself is the light and brought the light into the darkness. We are the children of light and light brings us hope. As long as we are living in hope with positive thoughts and attitudes, we can change our situations and ourselves.

As members of Christ, our mission is to reflect Christ’s Light to others by sharing our love, mercy, forgiveness, and humble service. In our own lifetimes, St. Mother Teresa is a great example because she brought blessings and joy to the poor, sick, and forgotten on the streets. Once, someone asked the source of her joy; Mother Teresa replied: “Joy is prayer – joy is strength – joy is love – joy is a net of love....” If we really want happiness, joy, and peace in our lives, let us listen to the voice of John the Baptist and experience the real light...Jesus... in our hearts. Jesus is the real light, who can give us real happiness, peace, and joy. If we can be filled with Jesus’ light in our lives, we can give real light to others.

During this Advent Season, let us make the important choice to permit God to bless us and to fill us with a new sense of hope and purposeful living. Let us live with the assurance that the present darkness is not our final destination, that there is indeed much lighter yet to come. Christmas is a message of hope and a message of light. We are waiting for the light. Rejoice, this Sunday tells us. The pink candle reminds us that this is a time of great expectations. We have every reason to be full of joy. Rejoice, Christmas is almost here. Rejoice, not so much that we have found Christ, but rejoice that He has found us.

There are times that each of us feel lost. There are times that we feel alone. But we are not lost. He has found us. We are not alone. He is with us. With Jesus in our lives, the crises we face become challenges, but not devastating events. A loved one becomes sick, or even dies. We become sick and receive the diagnosis that our condition is terminal. A marriage falls apart. A job is lost. A friend is lost. Whatever the crisis, we know that the final result will be union with God. Jesus is with us always, particularly in the worst of our times. Rejoice in the Lord. It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness. He is waiting for you when nothing else ever satisfies you. He is the beauty to which you are so attracted. It is Jesus who stirs up in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.

Jesus is there. He has found us. Now, the whole focus of our lives has changed. With Jesus in our lives, we are mature adults, living in His Love. Rejoice in the Lord. 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 and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.

These words of our first reading, from the third section of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah were read by Jesus Himself in the Synagogue of Nazareth in what we can call His first sermon. As Christian to the heart of our being, we also proclaim these words. We are anointed by God. We are baptized. And we are sent. We are sent to bring joy to the world. We are to bring glad tidings to the poor, news that God knows their plight and will care for them through His people here on earth, the Church. We are to tell the heart broken that God hears their cries. If they are mourning the loss of a loved one, they need to hear that the Lord has conquered death and that those who have let Him into their lives will live with Him forever. If their hearts are broken by events beyond their control, the loss of a job, the loss of a marriage, or any series of events that make them feel abandoned by the world, alone in society, they need to know that Jesus is the Mender of Broken Hearts. If they are held captive by others, or perhaps by their own addictions, they need to know that Jesus provides freedom and liberty. They do not have to spend the rest of their lives as victims of society. With Jesus they can be victors, not victims. It is up to us to lead people to the victory of Jesus Christ. We do this by sharing our joy with them. "I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul." I was lost, but now I am found. We were all lost, but He found us. His Grace is Amazing. Humanity yearns for hope, for meaning and purpose.

As we continue to celebrate Advent, let us remember that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for all, including the poor, the broken, and those mired in despair. No matter the situation, Jesus is a new beginning. While the sights, sounds, and smells of this season are wonderful and should be enjoyed, our focus should be on Christ and the message of hope he brings to all humanity. We need to spread the

Word that we do not have to wait for renewal. We do not have to wait for new life. Jesus has come to us, and the end of all suffering begins today. **AMEN!**