

Third Sunday of Advent (A)
Jesus is the Reason for our Joy!

Isaiah 35:1-6A, 10; Psalm 146:6-7,8-9,9-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you, with the responsorial psalm taken from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: “Lord, come and save us” (cf. Is 35:4). It is our confident prayer, knowing that only in our Lord Jesus are we saved.

We shift our focus from waiting for the Lord’s arrival to marveling at God’s salvific presence, who became one of us and made His home among us. This Sunday, known as Gaudete Sunday, is named after the Latin word meaning 'Rejoice!'—a call to let joy fill our hearts.

Our hearts may struggle with hope and doubt when it comes to rejoicing, much like those who waited for the Messiah centuries ago. Their dreams of redemption took many forms: some envisioned a mighty king, others a wise guide, a fierce liberator, or a bringer of justice. Still, others longed for a gentle God who would lift up the weary and bring salvation to the oppressed. John the Baptist, from his prison cell, imagined a Messiah who would distinguish the righteous from the wicked with unwavering judgment. Desiring certainty, he sent his followers to Jesus with a question that echoes through the ages: 'Are you the One who is to come, or should we expect someone else?' Likewise, in our own lives, we often face struggles that test our faith and cause us to question. Whether it's personal challenges, uncertainties in the world, or the longing for fulfillment, we, too, seek signs of hope and reassurance. Just as they awaited a savior, we strive to find meaning and strength amid doubt.

Jesus’ response encourages both John’s followers and us to seek the signs foretold by Isaiah: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, and the poor receive good news. Imagine the amazement of a man who has been blind since birth seeing colors for the first time, or a woman who has long been unable to walk joyfully stepping toward her family. Through these miracles, Jesus quietly reveals himself as the promised one, demonstrating that God’s saving power is alive in acts of healing and hope.

John envisioned a Messiah who would judge and punish, but Jesus chose a path of mercy, winning over sin by embracing the cross. This surprising turn—where defeat turns into victory—calls us to marvel at God’s endless love. Through the Church and the Holy Sacraments, God’s saving grace reaches us, not with condemnation but with compassion. Such news is worth celebrating, even when life is tough. Joy, a gift from Jesus, offers rest to worn-out souls and flows from His constant presence. It doesn't erase pain but transforms it into gratitude and trust. True faith doesn't ignore suffering; it offers it up, weaving our struggles into the sacred gifts we bring to the altar.

James encourages us to cultivate joy with patience, much like a farmer waiting for the earth to produce its harvest, trusting in God’s perfect timing. He reminds us that prayer is the source of true joy. The more we pray, the more resilient our hearts become, capable of enduring disappointment without losing hope. Joy grows as we recognize God’s gentle presence woven into our everyday moments. When God entered our world, He chose a humble manger, a place so remote and unexpected that few believed salvation would start there.

Through faith, we are blessed to witness the unfolding story of God’s salvation, from the wonder of Jesus’ birth to the sacrifice of the cross—a story generations longed to see. We rejoice in knowing Jesus as true God, who lived among us, sharing our humanity while shining with divinity.

We celebrate the living presence of Jesus, who continues His saving work through the Church and feeds us with the Holy Eucharist. Each time we receive this sacred gift, our hearts are filled with joy and hope. The Eucharist strengthens our spiritual bonds, nourishes our souls, and deepens our unity with our Lord Jesus Christ and one another. By participating in this Holy Sacrament, we are renewed in our faith and draw closer to the joy promised to us. Gaudete Sunday calls us to rejoice now, even as we look forward to the day when joy will be fully realized in Christ.

May our hearts resound with 'Rejoice!' as we await the fullness of joy yet to come.

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor