

2025_12_14 Homily
Third Sunday of Advent

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/121425.cfm>

Today the Church wears a rose color and invites us to rejoice. In the midst of a world broken by injustice and suffering, we Christians are called to be joyful people. Why? Because our world is filled with glimpses of the true and eternal joy of heaven. We all miss the joy of God's Kingdom. Often, to satisfy our desires for joy, we look for it in the wrong things: bank accounts, material possessions, pleasure, and positions of power over others. But in the depths of our hearts, we all know that even if we get these things, they will not bring us true joy in life. If we look around, we can see that true joy seems to be absent in the lives of a majority of Americans. Even people who have good financial support and a good life seem to be bitter and hateful. Also, people who are very religious are not always happy and peaceful.

Why are Catholics not always joyful people? The response could be shocking. Perhaps, too many of us have never encountered Christ. We have followed rules, tried to do the right thing, come dutifully to Church, given to the collection, and occasionally done good deeds for others. All good practices. But if we haven't fallen in love with Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we miss the essence of our faith, because our faith is about a PERSON. It is about Jesus. It is about loving Jesus and loving what Jesus loves. And Jesus promises that if we embrace this divine love, it will always lead us to experience true joy, even amid pain and difficulties. Sometimes, we don't even think about Jesus as a joyful person. The reality is that joy is a very HUMAN and DIVINE REALITY. In all the gospels, the joy of God is described when Jesus does something very human: celebrating, eating, and drinking. Jesus is accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. Jesus scandalizes people by His joyful life. But Jesus did not just love sinners because He had to. He enjoyed being with them, as He enjoys being with us, sinners all.

Why do we lose our joy in life? Life is never easy. When difficulties, or pain, or frustrations come to meet us on our way, it is easy to become bitter, hateful, and joyless. The world does bad things to us, and we do bad things to the world, to each other, and maybe most of all, to ourselves. Then, we can easily lose the joy of life. But if we fall in love with Jesus, we will always experience in this world, countless blessings that bring true joy to our souls. For instance, on an ordinary day, when the sun rises and when the birds sing. These are glimpses of the beauty of life. God created us in

joy and He created us for joy. The darkness of this world and the darkness inside us don't have the power to separate us from this divine joy, but sometimes we give them the power to steal our inner joy. We tend to believe that happiness is only possible when things go the way WE want. But joy does not come because something is happening or not happening. Once in a while, true joy rises up out of simply being alive, being able to walk, or from the fact that we are part of this world, with all its terror as well as its amazing and beautiful riches.

When Jesus was eating His last meal with his friends, knowing that His death was only a few hours away, he was joyful. He did not offer temporal happiness to His friends. What He offers is more precious than happiness because it is beyond the world's power either to give or take it away: Jesus offers us true joy. And this joy comes when we realize that the ordinary things of life are truly amazing and infinite signs of God's love. If we fall in love with Jesus, and love what Jesus loves, we can find glimpses of what true joy is all about, everywhere, and in every situation we go through during life. For instance, right now, here in our beautiful church, we can find joy in the flicker of the candles; on the beautiful faces of our altar servers; in a hymn, or during the Eucharistic Prayer; in the fact that together, we long for and reach out to a God we don't fully understand, because His love for us drives us crazy.

Maybe once in a while, when we receive Holy Communion, we experience the mystery of Jesus' saving love who comes to us to heal our wounds with his very Body and Blood. Or maybe when you are home and contemplate the face of your children or of your spouse, you see infinite beauty and love in it. If we look around right now, we may have the chance to realize that every single man and woman in these rows is not just another familiar or unfamiliar face, but is our long-lost brother and our long-lost sister, because despite the fact that we all have walked in different gardens and knelt at different graves, we have all come from the same place and are heading out into the same blessed mystery of an eternal life. Joy comes when we fall in love with the person of Jesus Christ and start seeing reality through his eyes. This is the Good News of today's readings: True joy is possible because we have encountered Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and since then, every moment, every thing, and every person, are extraordinary manifestations of His presence among us. And this divine and always visible presence brings us true and everlasting joy.

The Universal Prayer
Sunday 14th December 2025
Third Sunday of Advent

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, this Sunday is infused with a spiritual hope, anticipating and preparing us for the Good News of Jesus who went about doing good.

1. For Pope Leo, who is meeting with prisoners today in the Vatican, that by sharing with them the Gospel in which John the Baptist asks for Jesus from his prison, he may bring them hope and strength.

We pray to the Lord.

2. That weak hands may receive strength, trembling knees may be strengthened, and weak hearts receive courage in every place where there are people without hope.

We pray to the Lord.

3. So that during these days of Advent, we may be patient and not complain about others or our families, parishes and communities.

We pray to the Lord.

4. So that every effort can be made to end the war between Ukraine and Russia, and so that the dispossessed in the Holy Land receive the help and support that they need.

We pray to the Lord.

5. For the world to offer generous aid to those suffering from fires, floods, landslides, famine and drought.

We pray to the Lord.

6. For more vocations to the priesthood, in the Diocese of Raleigh and to religious life in the Daughters of St. Mary of Guadalupe.

We pray to the Lord

7. For all the faithful departed, that they may be received into Mount Zion and live in eternal joy.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Father, give us true joy and gladness as we welcome into our hearts the Great and Holy One, Jesus your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.