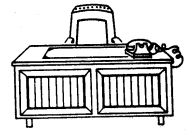


## 3rd Sunday of Advent

### December 13, 2020



From the Desk of  
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

#### Sunday Reflection:

This is the third Sunday of Advent, commonly referred to as the *Gaudete* Sunday. The *Gaudete* Sunday resembles the fourth Sunday in Lent known as *Laetere* Sunday. On both Sundays, the *Gloria*, the *alleluia*, exuberant music and flowers usually restricted during these liturgical seasons are permitted. Rose-colored vestments symbolizing the celebratory disposition of these Sundays are suggested in place of the seasonal purple or violet. In the Anglican Church and some Lutheran Churches, the rose color replaces the Advent color of sarum blue. You will also observe that on *Gaudete* Sunday, the third candle of the Advent wreath is rose in color.

*Gaudete* Sunday got its name from the introit of the Mass for the third Sunday in Advent, which states; “*Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico, gaudete,*” which means “Rejoice in the Lord always: Again, I say, rejoice.” On *Gaudete* Sunday, the Church calls on her members to celebrate the presence of God’s kingdom among us, though not yet fully realized. The renowned Catholic priest and professor, Henri Nouwen, states that there is difference between being happy and being joyful. He said that while happiness is dependent on external conditions, joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing including sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death can take that love away.

As we get closer to Christmas, the air is saturated with joy and anticipation of Christmas that is felt by everyone. We hope the pandemic and the misery associated with it will not diminish the joy associated with Christmas. In some cases, people may have to dig deep to find the strength to overcome the pain and misery caused by this pandemic. That strength can only come through faith in God. Apart from the pandemic, true Christian joy could be diminished by sin and its effects. Hence, as we enter the third Sunday of Advent, we hear that familiar voice of John the Baptist reminding us of his role as a witness and calling us to turn from darkness to light. One should never underestimate the power of a witness. In our litigious American system, witnesses often make the difference between conviction and acquittal, life and death.

John states unequivocally that his role was “to testify to the light so that all might believe through him.” It is interesting that one needs to testify to the light. Ordinarily, the presence of light is self-evident and needs no further testimony or commentary. Light makes its presence known by doing what light does, that is, shine and illuminate. Witnessing to the light is essentially for the sake of the spiritually blind who are incapable of seeing the difference between light and darkness. Like John, we are called to witness to the light of Christ.

John’s testimony erases any doubts about the true light. When forced to disclose his identity, he admitted he was neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the Prophet. In the mind of his questioners, all three identities point to the same person – the Messiah. John was not denying that he was “a prophet” but rather denying that he was “the Prophet.” We know that John was possibly the greatest prophet of the new dispensation, but he never claimed to be the Messiah. When pressed further by his adversaries, John identified himself as “the voice of one calling out in the desert to make straight the way of the Lord.”

As to why he was baptizing, John replied that he was only baptizing with water for repentance, but the Messiah, who was already in their midst, will baptize with fire. He went further to say that he was unworthy to untie the strap of his sandal. Untying the strap of sandals was a role reserved for the lowly servants in a household. John says he was not even deserving of that role in relation to Christ. Talk of humility!

Have a great week!

*Fr. Romanus*