

One young pastor had his own widowed mom as house keeper and cook who also lived in the rectory with her priest son. One Sunday morning he couldn't get out of his bed. His mother tried to get him out of bed, but to little avail. She shouted up the stairs, "Get up!" and he shouted down the stairs, "No mom let me sleep more" Then she shouted again, "Get up!" and he shouted down, "Why mom, today is Sunday let me sleep longer?" Mom said, "Precisely son, today is third Sunday of Advent and you have three Masses to celebrate."

Yes, today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent. And I was able to get up without any one shouting at me. In the tradition of the Liturgical calendar, the 3rd Sunday in Advent is often called *Gaudete* Sunday or Rejoice Sunday because today's Mass begins with the opening antiphon: "*Gaudete in Domino semper,*" i.e., "Rejoice in the Lord always."

Today, our joy in the coming of Jesus as our Savior, is marked by our lighting of our Advent Wreath's third candle which is '*rose-colored,*' and by the '*rose-colored*' vestments, which the priest may wear at this Eucharist. The rose color reminds us of the color of the *sky* at the very *brink* of morning, when the sun is just beginning to come up. The horizon takes on a *pale rose color* that gradually gets *redder and brighter* as the sun rises.

For faithful Christians, life is like a "long sunrise," and death is the entrance into the bright, "everlasting day" of eternal life. As we are approaching closer to Christmas, our joy gets more and more intense as we advance in our journey of faith.

The common theme running through today's readings is one of joy and encouragement. The readings stress the need for patience in those awaiting the rebirth of Jesus in their hearts and lives. They give us a message of hope—for people almost three millennia ago, for people at the beginning of the first millennium and for people today.

The prophet Isaiah, in the **first reading**, encourages the exiled Jews in Babylon to believe that God is going to save them and transform their lives. The prophet Isaiah, in the first reading, encourages the exiled Jews in Babylon to rejoice because their God is going to liberate them from slavery and lead them safely to their homeland. The **Responsorial Psalm** (Ps 146) reminds us of the fidelity, mercy and justice of the Lord God Who will come again.

In the **second reading**, James the Apostle encourages the early Christians to be patient, “*because the coming of the Lord is at hand.*” In the second reading, James the Apostle encourages the early Christians to rejoice and wait with patience for the imminent second coming of Jesus.

Finally, in the first part of today’s Gospel reading, Jesus encourages John the Baptist in prison to rejoice by casting away his wrong expectations about the Messiah and simply accepting Jesus’ healing and preaching ministry as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah. In the second part of today’s Gospel, Matthew presents Jesus, the true Messiah, paying the highest compliments to John the Baptist as his herald and the last of the prophets, and giving special credit to the courage of John’s prophetic convictions, asking his listeners to rejoice in the greatness of his herald.

On this third Sunday of Advent or Rejoice Sunday, as we rejoice at the thought that Jesus is going to be reborn in our lives, let us joyfully share God’s bountiful grace, forgiveness, and mercy with others. What Jesus commanded John’s disciples, he commands us as well: Go and tell others what you hear and see.