

While the first two Sundays of the Advent Season draw our attention to the eschatological coming of the Lord, or His coming at the end of time. The third Sunday focuses our attention much more on His coming in the present time and space or on the Lord who is already present among us.

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."

And the color of the vestment also changes from Violet to Rose to signal some change from the penitential character of the season and symbolizing our hope and our joy as we await the coming of our Savior at Christmas. We also light the rose-colored candle, the 3rd in the series in the Advent wreath.

And the source and cause of that rejoicing is clearly the presence of God in our midst. Having passed the midpoint of Advent, our joy gets more and more intense as we advance in our journey of faith. We rejoice because the day of salvation is near. Main theme of today's readings is joyful expectation of coming of Christ. It is like seeing light at the end of tunnel. It is like rejoicing because salvation is near due to corona vaccine.

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.

Today's readings are resonating with this theme of rejoicing. In the first reading The Prophet Isaiah tells us that he is sent by God to announce the joyful message of salvation to the people of Israel, to a people in bondage and he says:

I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul;
for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels.

This section of Isaiah comes from the turbulent period when the Jews were trying to re-establish themselves in their homeland after enduring a generation of exile in Babylon. The prophet says of himself that God has anointed him with the Spirit and sent him to bring good news to those in need of it. The good news consists of the healing of the broken-hearted and the liberation of prisoners. Then the prophet expresses Israel's joy at the coming of God's salvation, using the image of wearing exceptionally beautiful clothes, as a bride and groom do at the wedding. He also uses the image of the earth in it's bringing forth of new vegetation in the spring.

In the **second reading**, St. Paul invites us to rejoice and give thanks to God under all the circumstances. We should always rejoice because God has done great things in our lives. We should always give thanks to God because all things come for the purpose of our salvation.

In the **Responsorial Psalm** we see how Mary rejoices and sings praises to God because God has done great things for her.

In the Gospel of today we get John the Baptist again and learn his role as to bear witness to Jesus. He tells the people that he is not Messiah and he himself is not worthy to untie the laces of his shoes.

Last Sunday, we heard John the Baptist preparing the way by repentance and conversion of sins. This Sunday we see him baptizing those people who are willing to repent and joyfully expect the coming of Messiah.

So, today's readings remind us that the true joy and happiness is to be found only in God.

And if we put our trust and hope in God, then even in difficult times when there is a storm at the surface, we can "rejoice always" deep within. We can rejoice always by sharing our love with others John the Baptist did and as St. Mother Teresa did in very recent times.

This could begin from one's own family. The words and actions should bring joy and happiness in the lives of people around us. So, just start from your own

family members.