# “Rejoice”

Today, is the third Sunday of Advent. It is a time set apart by the Church as Gaudete Sunday or a time to rejoice in the first coming of our savior. We are celebrating the coming of the awaited expected Messiah who came to save us. He came because His love for us reaches to the heavens. He came because our God’s promises are unshakable and His truth reaches to the skies. Jesus is the light and the truth sent by the Father and He will come again in glory, power and majesty. That is why today, the Church takes a pause during advent to rejoice at our Savior’s first coming. He came again with joy to claim His bride the Church and we are the Church the bride of Christ.

Advent is the time we remember and recreate the first coming of our Lord by putting up a manger to remind us of His birth. It leads us to prepare our minds and hearts for the coming of the child Jesus and remember that Jesus will come again in glory and power. All our first reading point us to the ancient expectancy days when Prophet Zephaniah foretold the coming of our Messiah. His prophesy tells us to be joyful with all our hearts because God at the appointed time, has removed His reproach and judgment He had against humanity and He wants to make us His adopted children.

Zephaniah’s prophesy tells us that the Son of God, the King of Israel will take up our flesh so He could be one of us and be in our midst. He would defeat our enemies sin, death, and ultimately, the devil. So, His coming is not the time for us to be sorrowful and sad, but a time for us to rejoice and not to be afraid. He said our Lord would rejoice over us and we will be renewed by His love for us. Not only will He rejoice, but He will also sing joyful songs because of our redemption time would be at hand and His saving grace will over shadow us. The bottom line is that God is madly in love with us.

This love song by Prophet Zephaniah is one of many in the Bible which have traditionally symbolize love between God and His people. It is a love that celebrates young love which is thrilling, absorbing, affectionate, like an attachment that is tender, yet strong, unselfish, yet fulfilling. God’s love for us is unchanging, faithful, and forever young. It never goes dim or loose it luster and He is always ready to lavish it on us if we so desire it. God is love and He is a giver of love.

Young love is also a symbol of our love for God. Maybe some of us have never quite felt the intensity of young love in our relationship with God. While some who might have felt it, might have lost some of the luster and the intensity of our love for Him because it has weakened over time due to our struggles in life. One thing we should know is that God is like the father of the prodigal son. He is always waiting for us to come back to Him and He will welcome us back with open arms.

In our second reading, St. Paul told the Philippians to rejoice. He even said it twice to lay more emphases so they could act it out by their kindness to others. He was telling them and us that by our action of love, the world would know us and come to know about our Savior who came down to save us. He told us that no matter the circumstance, whether good or bad, we should give thanks to God through prayer and petition and make our request known to God even though He is all knowing. He said God would then reward us with His peace that is beyond our understanding and not like the earthly peace that we can understand.

What Paul is telling us is, the word rejoice which comes from joy with the letters JOY could be broken down to simple actions. The “J” means, love of God should come first in our lives. The “O” which comes second, means then, through the love of Christ, we will be able to love others, and the “Y” which means “You,” implies you will have the peace from God that is beyond your understanding and it will guard your heart and mind to always follow in God’s ways.

Our Gospel reading, tells us through John the Baptist what we need to do so we can receive the joy of Christmas spiritually and physically. John told them to share with those who do not have as much as they have, what they have received as gifts. When we share from the heart, we make others happy and we will be happy too because of our giving heart, God would reward us with more. He told the tax collectors not to illegally collect more than they were expected to collect as taxes. To soldiers who came to him, he told them to perform their duty honestly and not oppress the people by cooked up false accusation.

John the Baptist came preaching repentance as a preparation for the coming of the ministry of the Messiah. Repentance means, turning away from sin and a turning toward God. Part of our Christmas preparation in the Catholic Church during Advent is to make a good confession which is a practice in accord with the message of John the Baptist about repentance. When we do not help others who are in need confess. We confess when we decisive others by so we can accrue more earthly wealth than we deserve. We confess when we use our power to oppress others.

 From the Sacrament of reconciliation, we should seek to derive the grace from God so we can turn our thoughts to God and center upon Christmas as a spiritual celebration of God’s love for us. He who sent His only begotten Son for our salvation. Christmas should be a time of joy for us that we should carry over throughout the year.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us thank God for an unsurpassing gift of His Son for our salvation.