

Fr. Curtis Miller December 12-13, 2020 Homily for the 3rd Sunday of Advent

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent, the day when we light our pink or rose candle of our Advent wreath. Today is also known as Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word: "Rejoice!" It is a command; today we must rejoice. We hear St. Paul echo this same command in today's second reading: "Rejoice always!"

But what if we don't feel like rejoicing today? Maybe we're stressed about our job or finances, we're struggling with family conflicts or health issues. How can we rejoice at a time like this?

I'll tell you how: because Jesus is coming, and He is coming precisely because we need help, and He is our Savior.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He entered the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, and He carefully selected a scroll to read aloud before the people there. Jesus selected a passage from the 61st chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, the very passage we heard in today's first reading. He chose it because it sums up His mission, the reason He was born and became man for us.

As this passage reveals, Jesus came as the anointed one (literally, the Christ, the Messiah), anointed not just like any other king, but anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism in the Jordan River. Jesus came to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to free captives and prisoners, to announce a day of vindication, and a year of favor from the Lord.

In other words, Jesus' message is not: "Life is easy, you have no problems, so rejoice." Not many of us could relate to that message. Rather, through these words of Isaiah, spoken by Jesus, God says to us, "I see your pain and your struggles. I know your hurts and disappointments. But My love for you is stronger than all of that. To prove it, I am sending you My only Son, Jesus, to be your Savior. I sent Him to be born as the Child at Bethlehem, but I also send Him anew to you today. You may have to live amid the darkness of this world for a little while longer, but as was said of old, 'Those who dwell in darkness will see a great light.' This is the light of Christ. These first rays you see, these first glimmers of hope, piercing the darkness around you, is the dawn, announcing that the coming of Christ is fast approaching. Do not be afraid. Be stouthearted and wait for the Lord. Prepare yourselves to go out and welcome Him, for Jesus comes to conquer the darkness and fill you with His joy." So let us rejoice!