

### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT—Year B—M12-D13-Y2020

01. As we enter deeper into this Holy Season of Advent—and prepare for the coming of Our Lord at Christmas—the Church invites us to reflect on **the mystery of joy—and the role that joy plays in our lives** — to pray for the gift of joy, and to cultivate joy in our hearts — **and to strive to be joyful in all circumstances.**
02. Because joy is something that God wants for His people—even in times like these—and I would say **especially at TIMES LIKE THESE—when we are being tested in unprecedented ways.**
03. But like peace and hope, joy is something that is very hard to find—**even at the best of times —because often people mistake pleasure, entertainment, and amusements with joy—and often people mistake true and lasting joy with false and fleeting happiness.**
04. And although it's very easy to mistake joy for these—joy is not the same as **pleasure, or entertainment, or amusement—because ALL OF THESE are part of the FALSE KIND OF JOY that the world tries to sell us.**
05. For true and lasting joy is something FAR GREATER than **pleasure, entertainment, and amusement—in fact, it is greater than ALL OF THESE combined—and because of that, it is ALSO something that is more difficult to attain.**
06. **Still, there's simply no substitute for the real thing—for true and lasting joy—for all the pleasures and amusements that the world has to offer will ultimately leave us empty and unhappy.**
07. Just before His Passion and Death, Jesus says to His Disciples: ***I have said these things to you so that MY JOY may be in you, and YOUR JOY may be complete.***” And so, with these words, Jesus tells us of His IMMENSE DESIRE that **His Disciples be FULL OF JOY—and that His Disciples be people OF joy.**
08. And it may seem surprising to some—**but Jesus Himself was very joyful.** Even when He faced with persecutions and threats—

rejection and misunderstandings—abandonment and hostility — and even though **He knew that His Saving Mission would culminate in an extremely painful and humiliating death**—Jesus Himself was full of joy during His time here on earth.

09. But, strangely enough, this is **not an image of the Lord that we see a lot of—and we don't often think of the Lord as being joyful** — we think of Him as being holy, compassionate, loving, patient, and merciful—**which, of course, He is — but, for some reason, we often don't think of Him as being joyful.**
10. And we see this by the fact that **we have churches named Merciful Redeemer, or Holy Redeemer—but I don't think there's a church anywhere named JOYFUL REDEEMER.** Nevertheless, it's important to know that **Jesus Himself was full of joy**—and was in fact, JOY INCARNATE.
11. And it's ALSO important to know **that Jesus doesn't simply want US to be FULL OF JOY—but that He wants us to be full of HIS JOY.** Because the joy of Jesus, the joy which fuelled His life here on earth—and the joy that He NOW OFFERS US—is **very different from ANY OTHER joy — and very different from the FALSE JOY that the world offers.**
12. But what is it that distinguishes the JOY OF JESUS from the HAPPINESS that the world offers? **FIRST, the joy of Jesus is RELATIONAL — it is entirely rooted on His deep connection to the Father—and on His intimate relationship with the Father and the Spirit.**
13. In other words, the joy that Jesus had here on earth was entirely based on receiving the Father's infinite love—and on reciprocating that love in return — **on receiving the Father's gift of Self to Him—and by making of gift of Himself to the Father, and to us.**
14. And this is where **WE TOO WILL FIND true joy**—in an intimate, loving relationship with the Blessed Trinity—in which we make a gift of ourselves to God and to others.

15. In contrast, the joy of the world is **not relational, but SOLITARY** — it is **NOT based on the love of another—but the love of self** — the FALSE love of self as reflected by the **FALSE JOY of getting one's own way — the false joy of taking, and not giving — the false joy of acquiring gifts FOR one's self, instead of making a gift OF one's self.**
16. Second, the joy of Jesus is **INTERNAL**—it is **not found without, but within** — it is not based on conditions **outside one's self**—but on conditions **WITHIN one's self.** And because it's NOT based on EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES that are subject to change—it can NEVER be taken away.
17. In contrast, **the joy of the world is EXTERNAL** — being **ENTIRELY BASED on external conditions — on circumstances OUTSIDE one's self**—circumstances that the self finds pleasing. But as soon as one is surrounded by circumstances that **AREN'T SO FAVOURABLE—this type of joy is taken away.**
18. Third, the joy of Jesus is **ETERNAL**—it is **not subject to time** — it begins in this life and reaches perfection in the next — **it never ends, because the love on which it is based NEVER ENDS.**
19. In contrast, the joy of the world is temporal—**here today and gone tomorrow** — it is fleeting and transitory — because **the pleasures and superficial things on which it is based are also fleeting and transitory.**
20. Fourth, **the joy of Jesus is CELESTIAL**—meaning **it comes from above and transcends this earthly reality** — it is not affected by the events of this world, **because it transcends this world.** And **because it transcends this world—it can weather any storm the world throws its way.**
21. In contrast, the joy of the world is earthly — **it is deeply subject to events here on earth, and completely at the mercy of the storms of THIS world**—because it is **ENTIRELY ROOTED on the conditions OF this world.**

22. Fifth, the joy of Jesus is not based on having our expectations met—but on **making peace with the way things are** — it is not based on changing our circumstances—RATHER, it is based on **changing our attitudes, our thinking, and our dispositions ABOUT our circumstances.**
23. Moreover, the joy of Jesus is a gift, something that we receive—not something that we take—**something that we accept, not something that we earn.**
24. And finally, the joy of Jesus is **ENTIRELY rooted in love—not sentimental love, but sacrificial love**—the kind of love where we **lay down our life for others** — not necessarily in a physical sense—but in the sense of dying to **self for the love of God and neighbor.**
25. This is the **kind of joy that Jesus wants to give us — the same joy He possessed here on earth — the same joy He now possesses in Heaven** — a joy that the world cannot give — a joy that no one, or nothing, can ever take from us — a joy that **no tragedy, no misfortune, no trial or cross—not even the corona virus itself can ever destroy.**
26. Although **ULTIMATELY** joy is a gift—one of the keys to **RECEIVING THE GIFT OF JOY** is to desire **true joy and not false joy—and to be willing to work hard to acquire this true joy.**
27. I think this is why so many people have settled for pleasure instead of joy—or have settled for simply being entertained or amused instead of joyful — **because true and lasting joy doesn't come easy—it takes time, work, and effort**—and involves sacrifice. But **ANYTHING** that is worth possessing **usually involves time and effort—work and sacrifice.**
28. And so, although joy is a gift—it's still something that we have to **strive for, to work for, and to cultivate—especially at times like these.** And the first step, **AGAIN,** is to distinguish between true and false joy—**and to choose the joy that is genuine and lasting.**

29. A movie that demonstrates this well is one of the best films from the 1980's—the comedy classic called: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*—an **hilarious, fictional story about a high school student who seems to get away with almost anything** — including skipping school for a day to have a **highly implausible, but extremely entertaining adventure in the city of Chicago.**
30. Although *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* is essentially a comedy—**there are some rather deep messages imbedded within it** — and believe it or not, one of those messages is about joy. Because one of the subplots of this classic film is Ferris' relationship **with Cameron, his best friend—who is a very sickly and unhappy young man.**
31. But the difference between these two characters is that *Ferris Bueller* **actually WANTS to be joyful—even if he is not totally aware of the difference between TRUE JOY and FALSE JOY—Ferris SINCERELY wants to be happy—which is really half the battle in finding and receiving joy.**
32. Whereas, his best friend, CAMERON, doesn't really want to be joyful at all—at least initially. For the first half of the film, **Cameron seems more comfortable and content in being sickly and unhappy — in looking at the glass half empty — and in finding reasons NOT to be joyful.**
33. Which is a trap that is easy for ALL OF US (MYSELF INCLUDED) to fall into — in other words, it's **EASY to find reasons NOT to be joyful—or to settle for false happiness instead of true and lasting joy.**
34. And now that we're facing another lockdown situation—and one right before Christmas—**it's easy to find reasons NOT to be joyful. But, in truth, NOT EVEN the corona virus can prevent Christmas from coming—and not even a pandemic can restrain the joy of Christmas unless we allow it to — because it's ENTIRELY POSSIBLE to experience joy in the midst of challenges and adversities—even in the midst of something as unprecedented as covid-19 — because**

**true and lasting joy transcends this earthly reality, and anything this world can throw at us.**

35. In fact, it's often in the midst of suffering and challenges **that the joy that only God can give is most tangible**—because, **AGAIN, the joy of Jesus is not dependent the circumstances of our life, but on our disposition on life** — it's not dependent on the state of our affairs, but on the state of our hearts — **it's not dependent on having our expectations met, but on making peace with things AS THEY ARE** — it's not dependent on the media's perspective on matters, but on our perspective and **GOD'S PERSPECTIVE.**
36. And so, **as we approach what will be a unique and unprecedented Christmas for most of us**—let us not forget that, **AS POWERFUL AS THE PANDEMIC IS**—it cannot cancel **HOPE** or postpone **PEACE** — **it cannot destroy FAITH, or shatter TRUST** — it cannot prevent **PRAYER**, or suppress **LAUGHTER** — **it cannot distance FRIENDSHIP, or erode FAMILY** — it cannot quarantine **COMPASSION & KINDNESS**—it cannot lockdown **LOVE & GRATITUDE** — **AND it DEFINITELY, MOST DEFINITELY, cannot restrain the JOY OF CHRISTMAS. AMEN.**