

Jesus arrives with JOY!

Today is Gaudate Sunday, the rejoice-Sunday of Advent season.

Scripture today reminds us to “Rejoice in the Lord always”.

We wear rose colored vestments

Could we Christians be accused as living with rose colored glasses!

Are we really facing reality?

How are you looking at the situation of the world?

In today’s first reading the prophet, Zephaniah lived in a world that was not very hopeful place for God’s people.

There were enemies from the north, the Babylonians, and from the south, Egypt ready to take their turns pouncing on them.

Yet, the prophet says, “Zion rejoice!”

Zion: small city on a hill. It was where their king lived; where the temple of the Lord was.

In the midst of all the problems, the prophet says, the people need to act differently; they need to rejoice! Why?

Because the Lord is in your midst!

The word of God today challenges us to act differently as well.

- **The many problems in our church today,**

- The many challenges in our country and world.
- Difficulties at work or at school.
- Relationships at home or with friends.
- Teens and parents are not getting along
- Loss of a loved one is especially hard to bear.
- Bills may be piling up.

Do not deny them, on this Gaudate Sunday God's word tells us not to deny them but take time to celebrate that God is in our midst.

This is also the message in the second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice, Your kindness should be known to all;

The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all.

With thanksgiving, make your petition known before God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near.

When I hear those words (Your kindness should be known to all) I think of two images, two random acts of kindness.

The first image is a flier I received advertising a Turkey give away by Better Men Outreach. Better Men Outreach is a group of young men in our neighborhood who play basketball on Sunday afternoons. Many of them do not have a valid driver's license or car insurance, most have low paying jobs, and a number have troubled relationships. But they each year at this time, they are giving away hundreds of turkeys which they get donated by businesses. Yes, they live out the words, Your kindness should be known to all; the Lord is near.

The second image that comes to mind when I hear Your kindness should be known to all is an image from my childhood.

I remember growing up in a family in which my parents often faced challenges.

- They raised seven children in a three bedroom bungalow home on my dad's salary.**
- Mom was a miracle worker making the food stretch from one paycheck to another**
- She would darn holes in socks so that our toes would not poke through the ends.**
- We purchased much of what we owned from the five and dime store. (Dollar store of our day)**

O yes, there were lots of reasons for my parents to be filled with anxiety. But the family decided as the celebration of the birth of Christ was approaching, they decided to rejoice, for the Lord is near.

Yes, the season of Christmas in the Archambault home was VERY special, especially Christmas eve. After everyone went to Midnight mass, (my dad sang in the choir) we would come home, open gifts, eat specially prepared food and sing Christmas songs until the wee hours of the morning.

There was one unique custom which I remember in a special way. If we found anyone at church who had no one to celebrate with after mass, we would invite them over. It might be a member of the choir which my dad sang in, or someone from our basketball team or one of our classmates. They would be graciously invited, in fact ENCOURAGED to join us. And for those who accepted the invitation, there would always appear a gift for them under our tree.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice, Your kindness should be known to all; the Lord is near.

The examples of the turkey give away and inviting friends to our homes are ways to celebrate the Lord is near. But how can WE as a community of Corpus Christi, in the midst of all the challenges of life today, uniquely celebrate that the Lord is near?

Well, we have some very special Holy homework for you:

We know here at Corpus Christi, we have something very special to share:

- **Welcome all graciously,**
- **We have joyful music and an uplifting word,**
- **unique spirit of hospitality,**
- **the very presence of the Lord in Word and Eucharist.**
- **PLEASE PASS OUT CARDS! (Explain cards). Ask them to take five calling cards. Keep them handy in your purse or wallet.**

Hand them out to family members,

- **friends,**
- **co-workers or classmates,**
- **when you are in line at the grocery store or when you getting gas at the gas station.**

And I can promise you this: there will be a special gift from the parish for your family and for all our guests who attend mass this Christmas.

My brothers and sisters,

Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say rejoice. The Lord is near.