

**The Bells of St. Mary's**  
**The Church of the Immaculate Conception**

**Third Sunday of Advent**  
**December 15, 2019**

**From Fr. Anthony Columba Ekanem, MSP—Pastor**

~ **GAUDETE SUNDAY** ~

Last week's reading from Matthew Gospel 3:4, 6 described John's appearance in the desert of Judea as a "voice" and established his connection with the prophetic tradition of Israel in the Book of prophet Isaiah. This Sunday, the focus of the Gospel is moving towards how near we are to the Christmas celebration. This nearness and expectation can arouse a sense of uneasiness or impatience in the minds of the people. For this reason, James counsels us to be patient with whatever transformation we may be going through. Today, we are invited to rejoice and be patient, for the Lord is near.

This third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday. Gaudete means "rejoice" in Latin. We hear the word "rejoice" in today's scripture readings, in the prayers of the Mass, and in the hymns. Our theme is from the entrance antiphon: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near." (Phil. 4:4-5). In the Collect which is the Opening Prayer, we hear "glad rejoicing." In the first reading 35:7, Isaiah uses "rejoice and bloom...and rejoice in joyful song" to describe the creation. Today's readings convey the joy and expectation people anticipate. Isaiah's writings of the Chosen People returning from exile, is positively exuberant in his description of the rebirth of the land and its people. He is singing a song of rebirth, describing Israel after the exile. Like flowers blooming, disabilities are healed, sorrow turns into joy.

In the Second reading, (James 5:7-10), St James is encouraging and reminding his fellow Christians not to be overly optimistic that the bright future of the Messiah's era (the Second Coming) will not be fully realized on this side of the grave. For they were positive, it would happen soon. Therefore, he calls on them to be patient! "Make your hearts firm because the coming of the Lord is at hand." This reading is very consoling, especially when we are going through our ups and downs in life and we have no time to pause and reflect on what is God's will for us in our situation. This portion is to inspire us in our prayer to God in our struggle and suffering.

Last week's Gospel reading from St. Matthew takes up the theme of today's first reading of hope and expectation of Isaiah, the prophet. Jesus sends John the Baptist's disciples to tell him that the things Isaiah prophesied are happening all around them. Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them." (Matthew 11:4 -5). In other words, Jesus is reminding the people and us as well of the object of this season: a time to prepare for the coming of the Son of God, into the world, into our hearts, and at the end of time.

We mark this Sunday by lighting a pink candle on the Advent Wreath. The third Sunday / Candle symbolizes "Joy." It is also called 'the Shepherd's Candle.' To the shepherd's great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too. In Liturgy, the color rose signifies joy.

This weekend is known as Rose Sunday because the Church encourages rose-colored vestments. It is up to the preference of the priest celebrant to wear rose or purple vestments. It is a reminder that Advent Season is a season of joy because our salvation is already at hand.

There is a shift as you can see in our reflection from 'the Lord is coming' (Adventus) to 'the Lord is near,' (Gaudete), Rejoice! We are more than halfway to Christmas Day! Today, we joyfully anticipate celebrating Jesus' birthday in ten days. Today, The Arabic Community of the Good Shepherd will be starting Novena Prayer as well as the Mexican Community with the 'Posada' in our parish. Feel free to join them in this Nine Days Prayer leading to Christmas day. This is how our Community is blessed in a unique way to prepare and celebrate Christmas. Tomorrow, Monday, December 16, 2019 is a special day throughout the Archdiocese for Confessions from 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Come and prepare yourself!

Let us ponder over the central message in the readings of today's Mass:

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- "Courage, do not be afraid," says Isaiah, the prophet
  - "Be patient! Do not lose heart," says St James.
  - "Happy the person who does not lose faith in me," by Jesus to St. John the Baptist.
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Each of us should always remember that any kind of situations that cause us to be fearful, doubtful and even over excited are not meant to drive us away from God. Therefore, we should not allow none of those to lead us astray. Being able to go through our fears for instance with the right perspective is what St. James is recommending that we read again what prophet Isaiah has in mind. We must not allow our fears cripple us. Courage is never feeling afraid; it is feeling afraid and still go on with it in spite of it.

### **Stewardship**

\*Tithing - God's Plan for Giving on Sunday, 12/8/19 our Offering was \$ 3, 060.00

· Today's second collection for Church Property Insurance.

\* Thank you to all the Mexican Community for their Mañanitas donation to the parish \$994.00

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### Parish Family Directory:

Please see Dianne to make your appointment for your parish family photo for December 21 & 22 and January 4 & 5. This family photo is only for the use of the parish. If do not get a good response by the end of this week, we might have to call it off.

~ **Altar Server Appreciation Day** ~

Will take place on Saturday December 28, 2019 in the Hall. From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

### **NEED FOR A NEW BOILER**

We are in need of a new Boiler for the Rectory. The one we have now is having some problems and it has been serving for more than 22 years.

ATLAS WELDING & BOILER REPAIR COMPANY who maintains the Heating—system for us, are proposing we get a new one because the parts are now obsolete and are difficult to find or fix. A new boiler will cost us approximately \$31,350 including labor.

### **Sundays Readings:**

**First Reading:** Isaiah 35: 1-6a, 10 p. 27

The deserts exult and burst into flower. The hills ring with joyful song. The feeble grow strong; the frightened take courage. The Lord comes to save us.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10 p. 28 Lord, come and save us.

**Second Reading:** James 5: 7-10 p. 28 "Be patient until the coming of the Lord," said the author of the letter of James.

"The judge is standing before the gates." Take the prophets as your models in facing hardship. They spoke in the Lord's name.

**Gospel:** Matthew 11: 2-11 p. 29

John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus answered them affirmatively, pointing to the blind who see, the lame who walk, the lepers who are cured, and the poor who hear from him good news of hope.

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## **Religious Education**

### **December:**

12/21/19 - We will have our Second Family Catechesis Celebration. 12/29– 1/4/20 - No Religious Education Classes We need our students to help in various ministry during the holidays.

### **Cardinal's Annual Stewardship Appeal**

This time last year, we were able to reach our Parish Goal and even went beyond it. We receive a Rebate of \$4,587 from the Archdiocese. It was very encouraging to end the year on a pleasing note. In this Season of giving, we need your support again to reach our Parish Goal.

As of now, we are \$2,235 off to reach our goal. I know we can do it! This 5% required to reach our goal is mandatory. For those who have not pledged, we need your help. We are appealing to you to do so as soon as possible. We still need your support. This effort is one way of assisting in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and meeting our current financial need as a parish.

As the Archdiocese is rounding up the annual appeal in a couple of weeks, I want to also sincerely thank you, sisters and brothers, who have always contributed generously to this annual appeal. We are blessed to have people like you in our parish community. Our Parish Community that is made up of Arabic, Spanish, and English speaking, has never lacked behind in these annual efforts. Let us endeavor to include this desire in Christmas Wish List to reach our goal. Let us also come together and help achieve this goal. Thank you, and may our good Lord continue to bless your generosity.

**Christmas Flowers:** The Christmas flower collection helps to defray the cost of decorating our altars for Christmas and the names on the back of our envelopes will be placed on a Christmas plaque in the rear of the church in memory of your loved ones. Please see the rectory. Large Poinsettia Plants \$50.00

Medium Poinsettia Plants \$25.00

Small Poinsettia Plant: \$20.00

Immaculate Conception / St. Mary's Church

Will have Advent Reconciliation On Monday, December 16, 2019 from 4:00 pm– 7:00 pm

### **Mass Intentions for the week of December 14, to December 22, 2019**

#### **Saturday, December 14, 2019:**

12:05 pm - Johnny Rios + \* Melissa Carrion

5:00 pm - Carlo Ricchiuti + \* Vincenzo & Family

7:30pm Accion De Gracias \* Jessica Baculima

#### **Sunday, December 15, 2019:**

7:30 am - For the Parishioners/ Para Los Parroquianos

9:00 am - Julia Rodriguez + \* Daniela Jose & Family

11:00 am - Esther & Jose Duarte \* Esther & Eduardo Rodrigues

#### **Monday, December 16, 2019:**

8:15am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Alice Gewargis + \* Dennis Gewargis

#### **Tuesday December 17, 2019:**

8:15am - Available/ Disponible

12:05pm - Vincent L. Ciani \* The Bananno Family

#### **Wednesday, December 18, 2019:**

8:15am - Anthony Chettanil \* George Vadakel & Family

12:05 pm - Joanne Kunny + \* Anthony Kunny

#### **Thursday, December 19, 2019:**

8:15am - For My Family \* Anna Linus

12:05 pm - Avimalk Gewargis \*Dennis Gewargis

7:00 pm—Juan R. Melendez + \* Milagros Flores de Melendez

#### **Friday, December 20, 2019:**

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Thomas Reid + \* Catherine Reid

#### **Saturday, December 21, 2019:**

12:05 pm - John Moynihan Sr. \* Mary Ann Moynihan

5:00 pm - Leonard Spano + \* Vincenzo & Family

7:30pm Salvador De La Rosa + \* Bella Gonzalez

#### **Sunday, December 22, 2019:**

7:30 am - Magdalena Garcia + \* Marilyn Figueroa

9:00 am - Onesimo Tovar + \* Joaquin & Torivio Tovar papa

11:00 am - Celio Rodrigues \* Esther & Eduardo Rodrigues

*+Indicates deceased \*Indicates the person (s) who requested the Mass.*

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