

Homily: 3rd Sunday of Advent: Cycle C: 2024: Zep 3:14-18; Is 12: 2-3, 4. 5-6; Phil 4: 4-7; Lk 3: 10-18

“The Joy that Comes from the Lord Alone”

1. **Are we a people of joy and anticipation/hope?** Or are we depressed, gloomy and anxious most of the time? Are we a chronic complainer in which nothing is ever good enough for us, be it in our job, our family, our daily life, etc.? **In contrast, a spirit of joy is one of the most powerful means of witness** to others of the truth of the Catholic Faith. And it can permeate any temperament, even mostly melancholic souls - though realistically this is a bigger struggle for melancholic temperaments as well as people who suffer from clinical anxiety and depression – but even in those struggling souls there can be interior joy that comes from union with the Blessed Trinity in grace. ***But why should we be joyful and filled with hope***, when, in reality, the moral and spiritual state of the world objectively is not the best and/or our own personal family and our own life may have a lot of struggles and suffering of different sorts? **Because Jesus is always with us in all this! And embracing the Cross leads to salvation.** We are a people of hope because the Lord Jesus has indeed defeated satan, sin and death; as we await the final objective manifestation of that victory at the end of time; yes, even now we can share in that victory in our interior life: in our heart and mind. **How?** By allowing the Holy Spirit to deepen the virtue of Hope in our life. ***Hope is the infused theological virtue by which we have the confident interior assurance of the Holy Spirit that the promises of God will be fulfilled in due time.***
2. **We need to frequently remind ourselves, when tempted to think otherwise, that the Lord’s way is the better way to live rather than the selfish ways of the world.** Hopefully we learn to do this from the time we are young until we grow old in years- which is why family faith example is so important! The Cross of Jesus and embracing our daily cross in union with Him will lead to the glorious life of the Resurrection - if we persevere and daily fight the good fight against the devil, our fallen human nature and the selfish world. As we go through **the battle** of this earthly life, which does wear us down at times on the human level, the Lord will fill us with an increasing interior sense of joy, hope, peace and anticipation of the definitive manifestation of His victory over evil, as we progress in the life of virtue and overcome our

weaknesses and vices of various sorts. We will be then living increasingly the new life of the Holy Spirit which we received in our **Baptism**. Over time, this will also be seen more manifestly in our life, and so we will be better **joyful and hope-filled witnesses, full of God's interior peace** – **which attracts others to the Lord and the Catholic Faith** – which is our divine mission on earth from our Baptism onward.

3. **So how do we grow into this spirit of joy and hope in a deeper way in Advent and throughout the year?** By daily prayer and reflection - entering into the "holy silence" as I mentioned at the beginning of Advent. Daily taking significant time to reflect upon the mysteries and goodness of God and living in a spirit of gratitude for His kindness and mercy to us. Embracing more profoundly His personal love for each of us in the depths of our being - this leads to an inner conviction to want to live our Catholic Faith better with ever more generosity. Humbly asking for the gift of real patience with ourselves and others to realize that we don't become saints overnight, but only with God's help we can make definitive progress in the life of holiness - so we rely more on Him than on our own strength and try to give others the benefit of the doubt and pray frequently for them, and help others through works of charity and kindness. Also, always remembering to dedicate our day to God each morning and uniting the daily duties of our vocation to Him as an act of love, and penance when we don't feel like doing them, to grow in the likeness of Christ. Frequent, heartfelt, and thoughtful reception of the Sacrament of Confession – which we have a golden opportunity to do at our Penance service this Sunday by receiving the graces of forgiveness, healing and strength in God's mercy. Do we want to experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding or to experience it in a deeper way? To be full of true joy and hope? Then we must be reconciled to God and neighbor as St. John the Baptist says today in the Gospel. We must root sin out of our life. Finally, to quote St. Paul from today's 2nd reading, "*Brothers and Sisters: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. ... Refrain from what is evil. And may the God of peace make you perfectly holy and ready for the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will also accomplish it*". God bless you. †