

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, December 15, 2024
Third Sunday of Advent
Cycle C

A wise teacher once held up a glass of water before his class. As he walked around, he stumbled, and the glass shattered on the ground. Instead of lamenting the broken glass, he smiled and said, “Let’s be grateful the glass gave us its service while it lasted.” His attitude transformed an unfortunate accident into a moment of gratitude.

Similarly, life often hands us “broken glasses” – unexpected struggles, unmet expectations, or difficult situations. How we respond to these moments determines whether we live in joy or despair. Today, on Gaudete Sunday, the Church calls us to rejoice – not because life is perfect but because God is with us. Joy is a choice, a decision to trust in God and see his hand at work, even in the messiness of life.

In today’s second reading, St. Paul gives us a clear command: “Rejoice in the Lord always.” “I shall say it again: rejoice! The Lord is near.” Notice how Paul emphasizes **always**. This joy is not conditional upon good circumstances but flows from the knowledge of God’s presence.

Today’s gospel reading from Luke introduces us to John the Baptist, who proclaims Christ’s coming with great urgency and humility. John’s joy lies in pointing others to Jesus, the true source of joy. He reminds us that the

nearness of Christ is the heart of our rejoicing. So, how do we live this joy in our daily lives, especially during Advent, a season often marked by stress and high expectations?

Let me highlight four points...

1. Choose a positive attitude.

The pursuit of joy is, first and foremost, a matter of choice. Life may not always be easy, and things may not always go as planned, but we are not powerless. We can choose how we respond to our circumstances. Think of your mind like a bank vault. If you deposit uplifting and positive thoughts – thoughts of gratitude, hope, and faith – you will withdraw joy. Conversely, if you allow negativity, fear, and worry to dominate, you will withdraw anxiety and despair.

2. Trust in God's presence.

Joy is rooted in knowing that God is always with us, no matter what is happening around us. St. Paul reminds us that ***“The Lord is near.”*** This nearness of God is a source of constant joy. Even in suffering, in moments of difficulty, we can choose joy because we trust that God is with us and that he is guiding us through every trial. Christmas is a reminder that God came to be with us – he is *Emmanuel* – and that is a source of unshakable joy.

3. Focus on what truly matters.

The world tells us that happiness comes from external things, but we know that true joy comes from within. It comes from our relationship with God, our love for others, and our ability to see his hand at work in our lives.

4. Live with gratitude.

Gratitude is a powerful key to joy. When we focus on what we have, rather than what we lack, we begin to experience a deeper sense of peace and contentment. Even in the midst of difficulty, we can find joy by counting our blessings – by focusing on God’s goodness rather than on what is missing. Henri Nouwen reminds us, ***“Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.”***

This Advent, let us make that choice. It is said that the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives. God does not just give us joy; he gives us himself, which is the source of all joy. Gaudete Sunday exhorts us to rejoice not because everything is perfect but because God is near, Emmanuel, walking with us through it all. Blessed Columba Marmion once said, “Joy is the echo of God’s life within us.”

As we lighted the pink candle today, may it remind us that true joy is not found in fleeting pleasures but in trusting the God who loved us enough to become one of us.

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” “I shall say it again: rejoice! The Lord is near.”