

Reasons to Rejoice

ISAIAH 61:1-2a, 10-11 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24 JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

This third Sunday of Advent is called "GAUDETE SUNDAY", Latin for "rejoicing Sunday" and as a sign we light the pink candle of the Christmas wreath. We rejoice because we are getting closer to the celebration of the birth of our Saviour.

All the Readings in the liturgy of the WORD today express reasons to rejoice:

Isaiah in the first Reading speaks of the mission of the Prophet, who has received the spirit and anointing of the Lord in order to proclaim the good news of salvation and liberation to the oppressed and to the prisoners (verse 1-2). He then expresses gratitude and joy in the Lord for the abundance of blessings bestowed upon him (verse 10-11).

At the beginning of his ministry, in the synagogue of Nazareth Jesus will read from Isaiah and will apply to himself those very words of the Prophet (verse 1-2). Upon visiting her cousin Elisabeth, the Virgin Mary will proclaim the greatness of the Lord and express her joy in Him for his goodness towards her, as we read in the psalm for today (Luke 1:47-54). We notice that Mary has made her own the prayer from Isaiah as well (verse 10-11).

St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, reminds them to "rejoice always", and to pay attention to the Spirit of the Lord speaking through the Prophets in their midst. He urges them to remain faithful, because the coming of the Lord is near.

In the Gospel we read about John the Baptist whose mission is to prepare people's hearts to receive the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

A religious group, the Pharisees, don't understand the Baptist's lifestyle and preaching.

"Who are you, if you are not the Messiah?" they ask.

John replies that the Messiah he is preaching about is actually IN THEIR MIDST already, but they do not know him, because their hearts are closed.

Today Jesus IS ALSO IN OUR MIDST: He is present in his spoken WORD of the Sunday Readings, in the Bible, in the Church sacraments, in our prayer, in the person we meet in our home, in our spouse, in our children, in our parents, in our community, in the workplace, in the sick, in the homeless, in the poor...

DO WE KNOW HIM? ARE OUR HEARTS OPEN?

IF THEY ARE, WE WILL HAVE REASONS TO REJOICE AND CELEBRATE.