

III ADVENT 2020

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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THE INTROIT ST. MATT. 11.2-10

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“Rejoice in the Lord always,” Saint Paul tells us, “I will say it again: Rejoice!” Why should we rejoice? Because Jesus is coming! It’s time for us to get ready to welcome him.

The Third Sunday in Advent is called *Gaudete* Sunday...from the opening words of the Introit from Paul’s Letter to the Philippians. *Gaudete* is Latin for *Rejoice*. Today is also one of two “lighten up” Sundays in the Church Year...the other being the Fourth Sunday in Lent. Rose-colored vestments and flowers at the Altar symbolize a slight relaxation of the penitential emphasis of the Seasons.

Paul goes on to say our gentleness should be evident to all. We should not be anxious about anything, but in every situation we find ourselves, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, we should present our requests before God. And God’s peace, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Get ready...Jesus is coming...is the same message of the central character in today’s Gospel...John the Baptist...or John the Baptizer. He told people to turn away from bad and destructive behavior and turn back to God...to get ready...the Messiah was coming soon...in fact he’s already here! John asked the people to show they were serious about turning their lives around by getting baptized...by getting dunked in the river.

John’s work followed in the footsteps of the Prophet Malachi...who lived five centuries earlier. We don’t know anything for certain about Malachi...his name means “my messenger”. Malachi had a message to give the people and they needed to listen...and take action!

God’s people, including the priests serving in the Temple, were cheating God out of the portion of their offerings that was rightly due him. Malachi told the people to stop their foolish and sinful behavior. God would send a messenger to open up his way, and the Lord they were looking for would come suddenly to his Temple. John the Baptist was the messenger Malachi prophesied about.

John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins. They likely grew up together. But even John had his doubts about Jesus. The Gospel begins with John in jail because of his preaching. John heard about Jesus’ miracles and wanted to know if he was really the One they were waiting for or should they look for someone else. John, like many others, expected the Messiah to be another King David, who would lead the people in a revolt against the Romans.

Jesus tells John’s friends to go back to him and tell him what they had already seen for themselves: blind people had their sight restored; deaf people could hear again and speak clearly; people with skin diseases were healed; dead people were brought back to life; and the poor would hear and rejoice when they heard the Good News preached to them. John then remembered Isaiah prophesied all of these things would take place when the Messiah came. Jesus told John’s friends those who had no doubts about him would be happy.

When a man is ordained a priest...the Bishop charges him to be “a Messenger, Watchman, and Steward of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ forever.” On the Advent Ember days, which occur this week, please pray for an increase in vocations to the Ordained Ministry of the Church.

Spreading the Good News about Jesus isn’t only the job of the clergy. We are all Evangelists...messengers...now more than ever...in this time of global pandemic...our mission is to spread the Gospel of Hope...that comes with the birth of Jesus.

“Rejoice in the Lord always,” Saint Paul tells us. Jesus is coming. Let’s get ready to welcome him! And we will follow Saint Paul’s lead. We will all say it again...and again...“Rejoice!”

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