

Advent 3rd Sunday (*Gaudete Sunday*) "Rejoice, I tell you rejoice"

Joy to the world; the Lord is near!

The third Sunday of the Advent, called "Gaudete Sunday", the Church calls us to rejoice. We hear this call throughout the readings today.

Prophet Zephaniah, in the first reading says: "Shout for joy, o daughter of Sion, sing joyful, be glad and exult"

Today's Psalms exhort us: Cry out with joy and gladness, for among you is the holy one of God.

St. Paul tells to Philippians: Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I tell you, rejoice.

Why we should rejoice? What does it mean 'to rejoice in the Lord'? It is not a 'rejoice of Ha..ha..'; feeling as if everything is great.

It's a rejoicing that 'the Lord is near', and that should make our hearts swell up with warmth of joy, thinking that the Lord is near.

Pope Francis, in his 1st Encyclical, "Gospel of joy", invited every person, to an intimate-personal relationship with Jesus. Right now, my brothers and sisters, if I feel the joy in the Lord, then you can probably be assured of a solid personal relationship with Jesus.

If I am sitting here with my heart, a bit uncertain, then today we pray a bit more for the Holy spirit, that will bring us to a deeper union with our Lord. Regardless of the trials and tribulations you are passing through right now, the reality is that the Lord is in my heart, and that there is nothing more important than that! That there is nothing more

important, more beautiful, than a deep relationship with Jesus Christ; and that is the joy we are talking about.

Today's gospel acclamation from Isaiah says: "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring the glad tidings to the poor". This is exactly what Jesus said when he went to the synagogue, he opened the scroll and read, then concluding: "this prophecy is fulfilled today"!

Friends, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, the spirit of the Lord is upon you. It is given to us to bring glad tidings to the poor. Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. When I realize that the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, I actually bear that fruit of 'Joy' that the world needs today.

The spirit of the Lord, the spirit of joy, is in every single one of you sitting here! You received it at the time of your Baptism; and again at the time of your Confirmation.

The Hebrew word for 'poor' is: '*broken down*', or '*bent over*'. It is not just a poverty of economics. You received the Spirit of the Lord, to go to the 'broken hearted', those who are bent down, the lowliest.

My dear brothers and sisters, we know what is happening in the world around us. If we can claim what we are, we can declare and share the joy in our heart; the hope that the Lord is near. And beyond doubt, this will have a profound effect upon everyone around us. Let's ask ourselves, what are the ways I have found joy this year?

Let us rejoice in the Lord and spread the joy around us, because our Lord is near!

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