

Sunday 17th December 2017: THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.YR B.

Readings: Is 61:1-4,8-11; Ps 126; 1 Thessalonians 5: 12-28

Gospel: John 1:6-8,19-28

“ John gives testimony that he is preaching and baptising in order to prepare for the coming of another.”

Thanks for the electric guitar you gave me for Christmas," little Chris Cody said to his uncle the first time he saw him after the holidays. "It's the best present I ever got."

"That's great," said his uncle. "Do you know how to play it?"

"Oh, I don't play it," the little fellow said. "My mom gives me a dollar a day not to play it during the day and my dad gives me five dollars a week not to play it at night."

May I speak in the Name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,through the written word, and the spoken word, may we know your Living Word Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent, but there is another name for today, by the colour of my stole that I am wearing, which is Rose. Why Rose may you ask, well today is called Gaudete Sunday. Certain Sundays throughout the liturgical year have taken their names from the first word in Latin of the Introit, the entrance antiphon at Mass. Gaudete Sunday is one of these.

Gaudete Sunday is a joyous celebration. Although it takes place during the usually penitential period of Advent, Gaudete Sunday serves as a mid-point break from the austere practices to rejoice in the nearness of Jesus's return in three ways.

WHEN IS GAUDETE SUNDAY? Gaudete Sunday is the third Sunday of Advent. The date usually falls between December 11 to 17 each year.

WHERE DOES THE NAME COME FROM? The Introit for Gaudete Sunday, in both the [Traditional Latin Mass](#) and the [Novus Ordo](#),and from the Anglican tradition, is taken from Philippians 4:4,5: "*Gaudete in Domino semper*" ("Rejoice in the Lord always").

Like Lent, Advent is a penitential season, so the priest normally wears purple vestments. But on Gaudete Sunday, having passed the midpoint of Advent, the Church lightens the mood a little, and the priest may wear rose vestments. The change in colour provides us with encouragement to continue our spiritual preparation—especially prayer and fasting—for Christmas.

This Sunday's Gospel invites us to continue our reflection on the person and mission of John the Baptist. Today we depart from the Gospel of Mark and read a selection from the Gospel of John.

The Gospel for today combines a brief passage from the prologue to John's Gospel with a report about John the Baptist. As in Mark's Gospel, the Gospel of John contains no birth narrative. Instead, John's Gospel begins with a theological reflection that has come to be called the "prologue." This prologue places the story of Jesus in its cosmological framework. It speaks of Jesus' existence with God since the beginning of time. In John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as the fulfilment of the Old Testament and the culmination of the Word, the light that is coming into the world's darkness.

Following this prologue, John reports on the ministry of John the Baptist. We learn about the attention that John the Baptist received from the Jewish authorities. Messengers from the Jewish priests, the Levites and the Pharisees question John about his identity and the meaning of the baptisms that he is performing. John's Gospel uses these questions to establish the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. John the Baptist is not the Messiah, nor is he Elijah or the Prophet. In John's denials, we hear echoes of the kind of messianic expectations that were common in first-century Palestine.

The only affirmative response that John the Baptist gives is when he quotes the prophet Isaiah. Upon answering the next question, John announces that the saviour they seek is already among them, but as yet unrecognised. John's response highlights for us an important Advent theme: Jesus has already come into the world as our saviour. During Advent, we pray that we will be able to recognise Jesus' presence in our midst. Advent also reminds us that Jesus will come again to fulfil the promise of salvation. We pray that we will continue to be watchful as we anticipate that great day.

The third Sunday of Advent is also called *Gaudete Sunday*, which I mentioned in the beginning of my sermon. *Gaudete*, a Latin word which means "rejoice". This theme is echoed in today's second reading from the first Letter to the Thessalonians. It is a reminder that Advent is a season of joy because our salvation is already at hand.

And so we echo, Come Lord Jesus, Come!

Amen.