

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Third Sunday of Advent
December 15, 2024

What Should I Do?

My Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

The Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday, is a joyful pause in the season of preparation. The word "Gaudete" means "rejoice," signaling that we are nearing the celebration of Christ's birth. This Sunday's Gospel, taken from Luke 3:10-18, brings us to a moment when people asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" His responses were clear and direct: share what you have, be honest, do not take advantage of others. These are not abstract theological teachings but instructions for how to live justly every day. John, the last prophet, calls the people not only to hear these instructions but to act on them.

In a world saturated with words, it's often by actions that we can truly see where our hearts lie. Consider a modern example: a person who quietly volunteers at a local shelter each week. They do not announce it nor do they seek praise. Their actions speak louder than any words could. We might know them only as a "good person," yet the selfless giving of time and care shows a commitment to justice and compassion. Listening to what others do not say can sometimes reveal the deepest truths of their character.

John the Baptist was no mere teacher of morals; he was the forerunner of Jesus, preparing the people for the coming of the "main event," not an "opening act." Prophets, after all, are called to instruct the heart, not merely the mind. They remind us that as humans, we are in exile here on earth, longing for something more profound, a life closer to God. John's message was simple but profound: to live justly, to act in ways that bring us closer to holiness, and to prepare for a new kind of baptism that would come from Jesus—the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, a fire that purifies the soul.

This Gospel calls us to common acts of justice: share your cloak, be fair, don't exploit power for selfish gain. Don't be like the Pharisees, who spoke of the law but didn't live by it. Be an instrument of love. This isn't just about following rules but about listening to the quiet voice of conscience that nudges us to do what's right. In living a moral life, we can draw nearer to God, who is the source of all goodness.

While we don't choose our biological birth, we can choose a new birth into spiritual life by living intentionally and with compassion. This Advent season, let us go beyond words and embrace deeds that reflect the love of Christ. Be an instrument of peace, a beacon of justice, and a vessel of God's mercy. Let us, with joy, prepare for the coming of our Savior by transforming ourselves through actions that speak the language of love and justice.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy