

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
Third Sunday of Advent
December 17, 2023

Jesus Christ: He Is Our Joy Indeed

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

As we await the birth of the Christ Child next week, now is the perfect time to reflect on the concept of joy and how we might find a perfect example of this magnificent feeling. Yes, there is a sense of joy out there if we take the time to recognize it. Whether it's a baby's laugh, a grandmother's hug, or a feeling of accomplishment for a job well done, human beings continually seek and do find those moments that take one's breath away. We know they are transitory, however, and can vanish from our line of sight in an instant. Our memory may help us to recall them, but because they are fleeting, we seek other such moments to satisfy our hungry hearts. There is one perfect joy in our lives, though, which we often overlook because life can be so difficult and time-consuming—*the One who truly is steady, permanent, and life affirming*. Do we really understand that perfect joy is found in Jesus Christ who saved us from our sins and gave us everlasting life? He is our joy indeed!

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent, and we light a pink candle to celebrate Gaudete Sunday, a day of universal joy for mankind. The word, "Gaudete," is a Latin imperative and means to be happy. As we wait for the majesty of Christ's birth, we might take the time today and, in this season, to count the many blessings God has bestowed on us and appreciate his transforming presence in our lives. According to our first reading in Isaiah, Chapter 6, "*the spirit of God is among [us]. . . to bring glad tidings to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to captives. . . and to clothe us with a robe of salvation.*" These words contain the principles of our Christian faith, its hope, and the fulfillment of every dream for every person. He is our joy indeed!

Yet, there are those among us who do not see or understand the transforming power of Jesus Christ on this world and who focus only on the doings of secularism because these ideas take center stage. They ultimately have a negative effect on any type of spirituality. Yet, in the deepest part of a person's soul, I believe there is a voice—of faith, commitment to others, and love of God that can be heard if one listens. If this voice can be embraced, hope, solace and the grace of great things will result. It's an easy, painless, and profound way to find the greatest gift one can receive, yet many of us seem unable to recognize the voice within us. He is our joy indeed!

"In the face of the inevitable difficulties of life, the uncertainties and fears for the future, the temptation to give in to despair and disappointment, the Word of God always proclaims again the 'glad tidings' of salvation: the Son of God comes to heal 'the wounds of the broken-hearted.' May this joy, anticipation of the coming joy of Christmas, fill each of our hearts and every corner of our lives."—Saint Pope John Paul II

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy