

### **Third Sunday of Advent Lectionary: 9**

#### **Reading I - Zep 3:14-18a**

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has removed the judgment against you he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.

#### **Responsorial Psalm - Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6.**

R. (6) **Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.**

#### **Reading II - Phil 4:4-7**

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

#### **Gospel - Lk 3:10-18**

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

## ***Joy, peace, and hope, in the midst of a penitential season, humility.***

Joy, peace, and hope are three marks of a Christian: Salvation brings peace, peace is felt in joy, and the effect of this peace and joy is hope; all of which are supernatural in origin, gifts to be received with salvation and increase with increased holiness. *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* [Rom 15:13](#) The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, usually referred to as ‘[Gaudete Sunday](#)’ from the first word of the Entrance Antiphon in the Latin original, meaning ‘Rejoice!’. And indeed, today’s Mass texts are suffused with expressions of joy and jubilation.

Pope Saint Paul VI said, *“...man experiences joy when he finds himself in harmony with nature, and especially in the encounter, sharing and communion with other people. All the more does he know spiritual joy or happiness when his spirit enters into possession of God, known and loved as the supreme and immutable good. Poets, artists, thinkers, but also ordinary men and women, simply disposed to a certain inner light, have been able and still are able, in the times before Christ and in our own time and among us, to experience something of the joy of God.”*<sup>1</sup> He is telling us that joy should, in fact, be the basic mood, the normal experience of a missionary disciple of Christ, rising supernaturally from having been drawn into the divine life through Christ.

The prophet Zephaniah, in the first reading sees the joyful day of Zion present, and calls the people of God to rejoice at it. He echoes the words of Isaiah; *“God indeed is my salvation; I am confident and unafraid. For the Lord is my strength and my might, and he has been my salvation.”*<sup>2</sup> The response to the Psalm, also from Isaiah, tells us therefore to: *“Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”* [Is 12:6](#) In the Second Reading, St. Paul extends the same invitation to the Christians of Philippi: *“Rejoice in the Lord always... Rejoice.... The Lord is near”*, implicitly declaring that the prophecies have been fulfilled. Fulfilled in the one whom St. John the Baptist said was coming after him.

For us now, as in the days of the Baptist and those of St. Paul, Pope Saint Paul VI taught that *“the essential element remains the inner decision to respond to the call of the Spirit, in a personal manner, as a disciple of Jesus, as a child of the Catholic and Apostolic Church and according to the intention of this Church. The remainder is in the order of signs and means. Yes, the desired pilgrimage is, for the People of God as a whole, and for each individual within it, a movement, a Passover, that is to say, a journey to the inner place where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit welcome one into their own intimacy and divine unity: “If anyone loves me ... my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him.” To reach this presence always presupposes a deepening of true knowledge of oneself, as a creature and as a child of God.”*<sup>3</sup>

He continued, *“The Church, as the People of God on pilgrimage towards the future kingdom, must be able to perpetuate herself, and therefore renew herself down succeeding human generations. For her this is a condition for fruitfulness, and even simply for life itself. It is therefore necessary that at each moment of her history the rising generation should in some way fulfill the hope of the preceding generations, the very hope of the Church, which is to transmit without end the gift of God, the Truth and the Life. This is why in every generation young Christians justly ratify, with full consciousness and unconditionally, the covenant entered into by them in the sacrament of Baptism and reinforced in the sacrament of Confirmation.”*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul VI, [Gaudete in Domino](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Is 12:2.

<sup>3</sup> Paul VI, [Gaudete in Domino](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> Paul VI, [Gaudete in Domino](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975).

At times one gets the impression that the words of Pope Saint Paul VI have not been learned or understood by many. This also means that the faithful struggle to understand their own salvation. The whole purpose of Jesus' coming was to bring freedom, and the freedom Christ brings ought to give rise to joy and peace. *"The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*<sup>5</sup> No one is meant to be freer than the Christian who follows Christ. Therefore, no one ought to be more filled with joy than one saved by Christ. In fact, a joyless Christian is a contradiction in terms. That is not to say that there are not times of pain, of sickness, of failure, or great loss. Suffering and various trials are part of life since we live in a world forged in human sin. However, this joy, rooted and flowering in the depths of our being is meant to remain unaffected by the trials and vagaries of life. In fact, it is part of that which helps us to endure such experiences and to do so with a humble view of the cross. Pope Francis also reminds of this... *"The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Jesus joy is constantly born anew"*. Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii Gaudium](#)

*"Joy is to desire what rest is to movement"*, according to St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Paul, in saying "rejoice always" because new life lived in the love and mercy of God, the joy of our salvation, is the life of one who has finally found what gives life meaning, purpose, and value. Such as he himself discovered when he encountered the Lord in such an immediate and dramatic way on the road to Damascus. As Saint Augustine said to God: *"You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You"*.

When you live from that place, that spiritual centre of the hermitage within, you will have a joy that lasts. This is the *"deep peace which surpasses all understanding."* As St. Paul said, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but rather Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live, subject to the limitations of my human nature, I live in faith, that is to say, in the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and surrendered himself up to death for me"*. [Gal 2:20](#)

*"The sign that we have this joy in hope is peace."* [Pope Francis](#)

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<sup>5</sup> [Catholic Daily Readings](#) (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2009).