

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR A
THEME: **REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS**

The liturgy of the word for today's mass invites us to rejoice as we come closer to the birthday of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Today is called "Gaudete Sunday" because today's Mass begins with the opening antiphon: "Rejoice in the Lord always."

So, to express our joy in the coming of Jesus as our Savior into our hearts and lives, we light the rose candle in the Advent wreath.

Prophet Isaiah in our first reading encourages the exiled Jews in Babylon to rejoice because their God is going to liberate them from slavery and lead them safely to their homeland. In our second reading, St. James encourages the early Christians, as he is encouraging us to rejoice and wait patiently for the second coming of Jesus.

In the first part of today's Gospel reading Jesus encourages John the Baptist in prison to rejoice by casting away his wrong expectations about the Messiah and simply to accept Jesus' healing and preaching ministry as the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy of Isaiah. In the second part of the Gospel, Jesus expressed the highest compliments to John the Baptist as his herald and the last of the prophets, and giving special credit to the courage of John' prophetic convictions, asking his listeners to rejoice in his greatness.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to learn how to survive faith crisis. If John the Baptist after having direct encounter with Jesus, the Messiah, had his doubts about Jesus and his teachings, we, too, can have our crises of faith. On such occasions, let us remember the truth that our Christian teachings are based on our trusting faith in the divinity of Jesus who taught them, and on his divine authority which he gave to his Church to teach what he taught

We rejoice as the Lord's coming draws near. We hope that Jesus is going to be reborn in our lives, deepening in us his gifts of love, mercy, forgiveness and the spirit of humble and sacrificial service during the Christmas season. So, let us joyfully share God's bountiful grace, forgiveness, and mercy with others.

Like John's disciples, Jesus is also telling us today to go and share our joy and Christian faith with others by telling them what we have seen and heard.