

### **Third Sunday of Advent B2023**

I want to refer to the banner in the sanctuary with its representation of four advent candles. Each candle represents a stop we should make in this long journey leading us to the encounter with the Lord we will be celebrating at Christmas. Each candle carries a message that should be object of our reflection on our stop on this journey.

Today message is the joy of waiting. Traditionally this third Sunday of Advent has been called "Rejoice Sunday," Gaudete Sunday. Even Isaiah gets into the mood by saying "I heartily rejoice in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul." St Paul does the same thing by saying: "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Always give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

For sure, the daily experience of life contradicts this message of joy. In our cities and towns, there are shootings, accidents, suffering and death. In the world, nations and peoples, are in wars one against another, like today in the case of Russia and Ukraine or Israel and Palestine.

These negative experiences challenge the message of joy. However, it is in the midst of these negative experiences that resonates the message of hope that our Lord brings us. The prophet Isaiah anticipates beforehand the mission of our Lord when he says, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication from our God."

The coming of our Lord is a joyful event that brings about consolation and happiness to the world. When our Lord will appear again, God, his Father, will fulfill all human expectations and his promise to save us. He will let us enter the inheritance to which he has called us. He will triumph over all our negative experiences of life. He will give us a joy that is beyond all telling.

That is the reason why our Lord is coming again. He comes to bring hope, courage and healing to those in dire needs. He is anointed to bring joyful news of consolation to all, to assure the poor that their poverty will be changed into the abundance of God's life, to proclaim to those whose freedom is restricted that they will forever be free.

The prophet Isaiah rejoices already even before the promise comes true because he is convinced that God will fulfill it. He celebrates with a song of joy because he is sure of the love of God that will never fail. As seed sprouts and the plant grow into a big tree, so will justice grow and spread irresistibly into the whole world, because God has promised a Kingdom of universal peace.

It is evident that the seed of justice in the world is very slow in growing, but in spite of this we should keep the same trust and manifest the same hope as the prophet did. Many are the reasons that make us sad, and yet, like the prophet, we can begin singing a song of joy for the salvation that is about to reach out to everyone.

The prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled in the teaching and gestures of our Lord Jesus. Our Lord Jesus is the Messiah sent by the Father to bring salvation to the world and to set free all those who are captive of sin and evil.

We rejoice, because God wanted us to be saved in him. Jesus is our Redeemer. The Holy Spirit has been poured out abundantly upon him to announce to us, with mighty deeds, and in word, the time of the visitation of our God.

The testimony of John the Baptist bears witness to him before the Jewish people. To bear witness means to stay in the background. A witness is not there to talk about himself or to draw attention on his own person, but rather on the one for whom he is giving testimony.

This is what John does. He recognized that he was not the Christ, but just his messenger. He was quite honest and was not misled by any false opinion on his person. He did not claim honors and titles that did not belong to him. He said he was neither the Christ, nor Elijah nor any other prophet.

John calls himself a “voice”. A voice is a combination of sound that conveys a message. Once a message is given, the voice disappears. The Baptist is just a voice that witnesses the coming of the light into the world. Once his mission is accomplished, he disappears for fear that people take an interest in him, rather than following the light. What a lesson of modesty, simplicity and humility that should inspire us in our activities within the Church and in our relationship with one another.

The coming of our Lord in the world is like the light dispelling the darkness. The Baptist was the first to recognize this light and to proclaim his presence. All those who accept Jesus come to light and are not in darkness. From the example of John, we learn that to come to Christ, the light of our life, there is only one way, that is, to accept the witness of someone who talks to us about Jesus just as the Baptist did. Here we see the importance of human mediation in our knowledge of God. We count on one another to come to know God. May we help others to come to know our Lord Jesus by our witness of life!

It is striking to hear John the Baptist tell the Jews that someone important was in their midst they did not recognize. That is astonishing for this people that had received the promise of the Messiah. Is not a sign that something prevented them to recognize the Messiah? In fact, ideas, habits, models from society burned their minds and hearts to the point they were unwilling to change. The Baptist vainly tried to open their eyes and ears by urging them to convert, but it did not work.

The same thing could happen to us if we refuse to follow the light of Christ that some “voice” is talking to us about. We run the risk of remaining in darkness and of missing out the true joy that the Lord brings us if we do not listen to the witness of the Scriptures.

The time of Advent is a good reminder to us that it is important to convert and to welcome Christ, the light of the world. Let us ask Jesus to help us be attentive to the many signs of his presence among us. Let us prepare our hearts to welcome him when he comes in glory at the end of time.

**Isaiah 61: 1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24; John 1: 6-8, 19-28**



Homily Date: December 17, 2023  
© 2023 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD  
Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)

Document Name: 20231217homily.pdf