

SHOUT FOR JOY!

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Zep 3:14-18a)

Exhortation to rejoice

¹⁴Shout for **joy**, daughter Zion!/ sing **joyfully**, Israel!/ Be glad and exult with all your heart,/ daughter Jerusalem!^h/

Reasons for rejoicing

¹⁵The 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./

Exhortation in another form

¹⁶On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:/ Do not fear, Zion,/ do not be discouraged!ⁱ/

Reason to fear not

¹⁷The LORD, your God, is in your midst,/ a mighty savior,/ Who will **rejoice** over you with **gladness**,/ and renew you in his love,/ Who will sing joyfully because of you,/ ¹⁸as on festival days./ I will remove disaster from among you,/ so that no one may recount your disgrace.

THE FOCUS: Rejoicing

COMMENTARY

- Zephaniah prophesied during the time of Josiah, before the Exile.
- People were worshipping idols (*sun, moon, stars*), because of the pagan Assyrian influence.
- For a pious Israelite, it was not the proper thing to do; it invites God's judgment.
- People were living in fear (vv.15-16).
- For the prophet, in spite of sinfulness of the people, God assures them of his presence and solidarity.
- God/King/Lord will be in their midst.
- God himself is happy. He will rejoice... will sing joyfully. (v.17)
- Parallelism is the style in v.14.



REFLECTIONS

The third Sunday of Advent gives us the reasons to be joyful. **One reason:** God has removed his judgment (punishment). Enemies (*those who destroy our families, properties, our nation, our identity, our religious beliefs*) cease. God will be the one ruling us, not our invaders. **Another reason:** though powerful, our God is able to rejoice; he feels with us; he becomes human to us. He joins us in our rejoicing.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6)
**CRY OUT WITH JOY AND GLADNESS:
FOR AMONG YOU IS THE GREAT
AND HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.**

SECOND READING (Phil 4:4-7)

^{4c}**Rejoice*** in the Lord always. I shall say it again: **rejoice!** ^{5d}Your kindness* should be known to all. The Lord is near. ^{6e}Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. ^{7f}Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

THE FOCUS: Rejoice!

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C) • December 13, 2015

COMMENTARY

- V.4 sets the mood of the Reading. In the imperative mood: Rejoice.
- V.5 gives the reasons for rejoicing:
 - kindness should be known,
 - the Lord is near.
- V.6 exhorts every Christian to pray.
- V.7 expresses the result of rejoicing and praying: peace of God will guard....

REFLECTIONS

Paul in his prison cell is able to encourage his fellow Christians to rejoice. Rejoicing is triggered by the coming of Christ soon. Anxiety has no place in Christian lives expecting the coming of the Lord.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 3:10-18)

Crowds to John

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

John’s response

¹¹He said to them in reply, “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.”

Tax collectors to John

¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

John’s response

¹³He answered them, “**Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.**”

Soldiers to John

¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And what is it that we should do?”

John’s response

He told them, “**Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.**”

People to John

¹⁵Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah.

John’s response

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷His 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.” ¹⁸Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

THE FOCUS: On Appropriate Behavior

COMMENTARY

- This is the Question and Answer portion of John’s ministry.
- All kinds of people consult with John regarding the concrete application of his teaching on repentance.
- John is able to identify the sins of each group and give appropriate solutions.
- His answers have something to do with justice and charity or vice versa.
- Christians should be able to share the little they have (clothing and food).
- The one who has is exhorted to share. It does not matter how much one has.
- Apportioning, sharing of goods must be part of Christian agenda, plan of life.
- Who cannot be happy if there is justice and charity?

REFLECTIONS

We have summarized the exhortations of John the Baptist into 2: justice and charity. Conversion is not just a piety or something emotional, but an intelligent commitment to charity and justice.

Our work, positions and power can be a source of oppression.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING/HOMILY

The First Reading exhorts the sorrowing to rejoice. It enumerates many reasons why we

should rejoice: coming of the savior, no more misfortunes. The Second Reading likewise exhorts Christians to rejoice, because the coming of the Lord is near. And the Gospel does not explicitly exhort us to rejoice, but surely, if all of us do what Saint John the Baptist is telling us, there will be rejoicing, especially those who have not.

How to develop your homily

This third Sunday of Advent accentuates the message of joy. After one more Sunday, it is Christmas.

Ask the congregation: Have you been happy with your life? Why? (new house, son passed board exams, found a new friend, etc.)

Some people cannot be happy because of the many problems they are facing: bills to pay, loss of a loved one, feeling oppressed, feeling abandoned, injustices, hopelessness, prolonged illness, conflicts with friends and relatives and employers/employees, etc.

Do not we have the right to rejoice (to be happy) when we are facing all kinds of misfortunes?

The answer of the Readings is in the affirmative. According to the Readings, we have no right to be sad because there are many reasons to be happily disposed.

The prophet in the First Reading exhorts the people to rejoice because God removes judgment (punishment).

Paul in the Second Reading exhorts the

Christians to rejoice because Christ is coming soon. He knows its implications: end of misery, victory of good.

The Gospel Reading teaches us to be just and charitable in order to create joyful situations.

If today we are not able to rejoice, then we should ask ourselves if we have faith in God; we should ask if our lives are that desperate or our fate irreversible.

We have no right to lead our communities, parishes and companies if our nature is always to see the dark side of things, like spoiling a party or refusing to join a party, if we are not able to make other people happy.

In our communities, we need people who can give us energy and hope in the midst of crisis (typhoons in Metro Manila, Bicol, Northern Luzon, Samar and Leyte). We need people who can celebrate life with us, who can increase the little hope that we have, and who allow us to die in dignity. This is the exercise of basic justice and charity.

Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is *Gaudete Sunday*. Make a list of reasons why you should be joyful. Share.
2. Shared sorrow is half pain; shared joy is double bliss! Share an experience to prove this is true. (HM)

