

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT; Cycle – C; Dec. 15th 2024
Zephaniah. 3: 14-18; Philippians. 4: 4-7; Luke 3: 10-18

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

As we celebrate the third Sunday of Advent this week, remember, we are half way to Christmas. That is why the Church sets apart this Sunday as the day of rejoicing for we are very close to the big celebration. The rose candle and the rose vestments are the symbol of joy. And also the three Scripture passages encourage us to rejoice. There isn't anyone in the world who will not seek joy in everything they do. But people choose different paths to acquire joy. For some, it will be material wealth; others it can be fame or reputation; yet a small percentage of people seek joy in helping the poor and needy. In fact, the joy that comes out of the charitable work we do will be lasting. All the joy coming from other sources is temporary and they end up in this world itself.

In the gospel passage we hear John the Baptist give the desperate people the secret of real joy. *He says, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise"*. So the sharing of our goods with the poor and the needy will give us lasting joy. The joy we get, when we share our time, talents and money with someone, will be lasting in our hearts and we will carry the same to the other world. Perhaps, many of you have experienced that joy in your life. The maxim is absolutely true, **"Sharing is caring."**

Christmas offers us a lasting joy provided we keep the real spirit of the event. During this season many people seek joy only in the material celebrations. Unfortunately, as the Christmas decorations come down the joy attached to them also leaves them. But during this season if you can add a little joy to someone by your **kind word, a timely phone call, a smile, a little visit to a homebound, a word of appreciation and encouragement to the depressed and a small gift to a poor child or family, it will bring you enormous amount of lasting joy.**

We all can do such small acts of kindness to someone. Mother Theresa reminds us, **"Most of us are not called to do great things; but all of us can do small things with great love."** So I request you, during this hectic Christmas season while you are concentrating on your family and celebrations and throw so much money in the malls to buy gifts for your grandchildren and children, please go beyond that and add a little difference in somebody's life. On this Christmas day too our children will be overloaded with gifts. And their excitement and joy last only a week. Soon they will be bored with them and will dumb them in the attic or closet. At the same time remind them of the sad fact that on this Christmas day too, according to the WHO 20,000 children like them, will

die all over the world of starvation. Teach them in their young age on to share their goods with the poor fellow children.

Our eternal salvation or eternal damnation will depend on what we have done or refused to do for somebody in need of our help. **Please remember the words of Jesus, at the Last Judgment, “Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt. 25:40).** In other words, Jesus will be asking you and me, what difference did you make in my brothers and sisters? We all should make good efforts to reveal God’s love in whatever we do. The words of St. Basil is eye opening; he says, *“The extra bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor.”* God’s presence will be amidst of us, when we do something good for our brothers and sisters. *No doubt, when we love one another Jesus is born in our hearts; when we hate each other Jesus dies in our hearts.*

In the Book of Sirach the author instructs us, **“Water quenches the flaming fire, and alms atone for sins. He who does a kindness is remembered afterward; when he falls, he finds a support” (Sirach 3:29-30).** In the Book of Proverbs 19:17 we read, **“He who has compassion on the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his good deed.”**

Mahatma Gandhi, the National Leader of India, writes, “To give joy to a single heart by a single act is better than a thousand heads bowing in prayer.”

On this Sunday the words of St. Peter is also worth noticing: **he says, “Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.” – (1Pet 4:8)**