

3rd Sunday of Advent

My beloved brothers and sisters, one of my greatest privileges as a priest, is to prepare young couples for Holy Marriage. As I have done so, many of them have reported to me the great joy, that they are pregnant. Both the young woman and the young man are joy-filled when they discover their pregnancy; and I rejoice with them as well. They have a joyous expectation for the impending birth of their child. All of you women and men, know that the pregnancy often involves some anxious moments as well, changes of hormones, planning, financial doubts, but none of those things can drown out the crescendo of joy filling their hearts, and this joy reaches its climax on the day of delivery! The season of Advent on this Sunday is switching gears, the focus of the Season is the imminent arrival of the Promise of God in Jesus which we are going to celebrate next weekend.

The Amazing message of St. John in the Gospel for today, than any believing Jew at that time would have picked up on with awe, is that the Messiah was already in their midst. For John and the believers at that time, the Messiah was not coming; he had already come, He had not yet begun His public ministry. For others, this was nonsense, because they expected a Messiah who would come in power and in glory, to “clean the house of Israel” of the evil influences of their time. There are many people today, who have grown tepid in their faith, because they too do not see Jesus in His glory. It is their expectations which prevent them from seeing what John the Baptist and all of the saints throughout the ages have seen: “Jesus has already come.” The Redeemer has redeemed us, and He is constantly at work in the world through His Church and His people, leading His people into the saving Grace of His salvation! He is already amongst us, hidden, but always ready to reveal Himself to those who open their hearts to Him by prayer, by the Sacraments and in our encounters with Him through the good people He sends into our lives!

In the first reading, Isaiah reminds us that the Anointed One is coming to bring good things to us and is our cause for rejoicing. The cause of our rejoicing, is that in the midst of human suffering our God comes to be with us: Emmanuel, He comes to bring us vindication, by freeing us from blame for our past guilt. My

beloved brothers and sisters, we rejoice, even in the midst of our difficult struggles, because God in the flesh, Emmanuel, remains with us. We rejoice, because God is always faithful to His promises- wait for them. We rejoice, because He already dwells within the hearts of believers who love Him, whom He loves without boundaries: This is the good news which Paul reaffirms: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice!"