

3rd Sunday of Advent

On this Gaudete Sunday, it's as though we can't rein in our rejoicing at the promise of the incarnation of our saviour, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He alone can give us true happiness.



Zephaniah 3:14-18

The post-exilic prophet looks forward to a time of joy as he awaits the coming of the Messiah. Jesus uses this prophecy to announce the programme of his own ministry.

Philippians 4:4-7

Trust in Jesus Christ and you will find true happiness.

Luke 3:10-18

John the Baptist again; he announces the presence, unknown to them, of the Christ, the Anointed One, and predicts baptism by water and the Holy Spirit.



"He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire".

John the Baptist preached a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People who wanted to reform their lives asked, "What then should we do?". John told each group to do more than the law required. John contrasted **his** baptism with the Baptism of Jesus. John the Baptist baptised only with water to symbolise a conversion to the will of God, but that "one mightier" who was to come, his Baptism would be definitive. The baptism of Jesus would be an act of God bringing salvation through the Holy Spirit and the purifying fire of judgment. John used the image of a winnowing fan, used to separate the wheat

from the chaff, to describe God's coming judgment that would divide the good from the bad. In Baptism, Christians die to their former lives of sin, and rise to a new life with Christ.



Reflection

A gunman stepped out of car, rested a rifle on the car door & aimed at a Church. The doors of the Church were wide open: you could see right up the long aisle to the target: a priest just finishing the homily at mass: He was saying: “You must not love yourself so much, as to avoid getting involved in the risks to life that history demands of us ... The shot rang out. That’s how the life of Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, ended, on the 24th March 1980.

The previous 3 years Oscar Romero had preached the Gospel to everyone. He’d denounced the sins of the murderers & torturers who were destroying his country. He’d used the Archdiocesan Radio Station to speak to everyone - and everyone listened. To the poor he was “voice of those who have no voice”. The rich & the powerful had no time for him; they called him a Communist: they publicly denounced him as an enemy of State.

“We have never preached violence, “Romero said, “except the violence of love; the love which left Christ nailed to a cross, the violence that we’ve got to do to ourselves to overcome our **selfishness** and such cruel **inequalities** among us.”

Authorities tried to jam his radio transmissions. But he went on faithfully giving sermons - and the poor people of El Salvador hung

on his words. What kind of a gospel would it be, Romero asked, that didn't provoke a crisis in you? Nice, pious considerations that don't bother people: this is what a lot of people would like. A gospel like that never hurts anyone, & never helps anyone, either. No, the Gospel is courageous: it makes demands on us, even to the giving of our lives.



Our readings today are all about the figure who dominates Advent: John the Baptist. And the message Oscar Romero gave was really the same message that **JB** gave. John the Baptist, like Romero, was regarded both as messenger from God and as a madman; a holy man and a troublemaker. People asked John the Baptist: "What have we got to do to make ourselves ready to meet the Lord when he comes?" John gave them simple gospel answers. Share with people who haven't got anything. Don't

exploit other people either for money or for power or for position. He reminded rich people and the military that true wealth, true influence and true power are spiritual things, not matters of money and guns.

20 centuries after John the Baptist, in our own time, Oscar Romero gave the same message to his people. He said: "The Church says to the rich: Do not sin by misusing your money. It says to the powerful: Do not misuse your political influence. Do not misuse your weaponry. Do not misuse your power."

Abuse of power has brought great suffering to millions of people. We're all tempted to misuse any power we've got over other people.

JB tells us today, “The one who is coming is more powerful than I am.” He’s the one we’ve all got to face. A feeling of expectancy, it says, grew among the people.

That question: What do we have to do in our lives?

If we haven’t got any sense of God, if we haven’t got any sense of justice, we won’t be expecting anything. We’ll just fall into lazy ways of living. Then the Gospel will be only a storybook. The Gospel won’t have any power over us; it won’t be able to touch us; it won’t be able to move us; it won’t be able to bring us to life.

That’s why we need the Oscar Romeros to shake us up, to be a John the Baptist for us today. In Advent 1978: this is what Romero said: “Advent should admonish us to discover, in each brother or sister that we meet, in each friend whose hand we shake, in each beggar who asks for bread, in each worker who wants to use the right to join a union, in each peasant who looks for work in the coffee groves, to discover **the face of Christ**. Then it would not be possible to rob the poor, to cheat them, to deny them their rights. **They are Christ**, & whatever is done to them Christ will take as done to him. This is what Advent is: Christ living among us.”

A bullet stopped his heart beating, but it couldn’t silence his voice. Oscar Romero’s voice is still heard: a voice crying in wilderness of today’s worldly greed, a voice calling to us here in Stratford today.

A feeling of expectancy, of approaching life can come to you, if you will listen out for that voice. You will say, “What must I do?” And you’ll hear a voice answer, “Follow me.” “Follow me, this Advent.”



The ADVENT WREATH

Advent wreaths are traditionally made from evergreen branches and have four candles. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent—three candles are purple, and one is a rose colour. The purple represents prayer, penance, and preparation for the coming of Christ, both at Christmas and at the second coming. The rose candle is lit on this third Sunday of Advent, (Gaudete Sunday). At Mass on today, the priest may wear purple or rose-coloured vestments. Gaudete Sunday is a day for rejoicing and joy as we draw near to the birth of Jesus; it marks the midpoint of Advent.

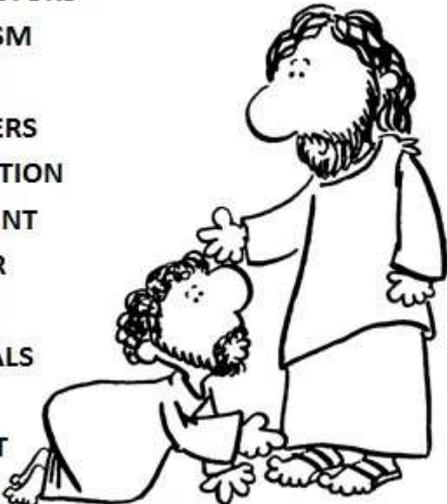
“The progressive lighting of the candles represents the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord’s coming into the world and the anticipation of his second coming to judge the living and the dead”.

They say that the circle of the Advent wreath, which has neither a beginning nor an end. It reminds us of God's unending love that we should show our Lord and our neighbours. The green colour of the wreath represents hope and life, a sign that Christ is alive among us.

During the Advent season, we notice a common theme in the Gospel readings. The readings focus on preparation or “making straight the path of the Lord.”

This should remind us of the importance of preparing our hearts for the Lord and making room for his presence in our lives.

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

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