

HOMILY 3rd SUNDAY ADVENT December 14, 2025

Gaudete, rejoice! I was having a conversation with one of our altar servers last week and they asked me why we wear the rose vestment on the third Sunday of Advent. I told him that it is Gaudete Sunday, which means rejoice or be joyful in Latin. I told him that we are joyful because Christmas is coming soon. He said “why isn’t it the fourth Sunday because then Christmas is really near?” That makes perfect sense, doesn’t it? Historically, and some of you will remember this, Advent was a time of fasting, abstinence and penance. Half way through Advent there was a needed break from all of that. Things are different today. In our culture we really start celebrating Christmas on Thanksgiving when Santa Claus comes to town. Today there is not much fasting, abstinence and penance going on. We are preparing for Christmas and celebrating Christmas at the same time. Sometimes we get so caught up in all the business that we lose our joy. Maybe we need to take a break today and find the joy.

Look at the things that are on your to do list and see if you can find joy in them, if you can delay them or if you can just not do them at all. If you still have to put up your Christmas tree, don’t make it another chore. Don’t do it alone. Invite someone over who no longer puts up a tree themselves and do it with them. They will probably really like that and you will spend some joyful time with them. For years I have put up my Christmas tree with my niece. I think it is a joyful time for both of us. Christmas cards? They do not have to go out before Christmas. You get a lot of them before Christmas; the cards that come later become special. Or maybe you do not need to send them at all this year. I get a lot of cards for Christmas. I love getting them. They have such beautiful art work on them. Some of them that I get before Christmas I do not open until after Christmas when I have more time. I gave up sending Christmas cards years ago because I don’t have the time and I do not think anyone is mad at me because of it. And how about that Christmas

shopping? Do you have to exchange gifts before or on Christmas? Children need to have gifts on Christmas, but how about adults. Do some of your shopping after Christmas. You may find great deals after Christmas. Or maybe agree not to exchange gifts this year if there is still time to do that. Look at your list and see how you can make these activities joyful.

Remember that joy is a choice. Maybe it is time to start to resurrect your gratitude journal. Write down three very specific things that you are grateful for every day. It only takes a minute. If you do it every day, you start looking for things each day that you can write in your journal and it will change your disposition. Live in the present, it is all we have. Try to find joy in whatever you are doing at the moment. I can find joy in doing things that are difficult or challenging if I keep in mind that I am doing something important. Stop ruminating over past Christmases that were not so joyful. Leave them in the past. Stop trying to make this Christmas a perfect Christmas. Accept that it will not be perfect and keep in mind that the thing that makes it imperfect may be the thing that brings you joy. Some of the disasters bring joyful memories. My sister had two consecutive disasters on Christmas. One year my brother-in-law leaned on the fireplace mantel and the whole thing fell off! The next year the kitchen sink just dropped out! We tell these stories and laugh about them all of the time.

Think about the things that you can do to help others. That will always bring you joy. Think of someone in your life who is going through a difficult time. Maybe they are grieving the loss of a loved one or dealing with a difficult medical diagnosis. When we are going through difficulties, sometimes Christmas is very difficult because it is supposed to be a happy time. Sometimes when we are going through difficult times, we isolate ourselves and just feel worse. Maybe you can include them in a joyful gathering and help them to find joy at least for a few hours.

So, Gaudete, rejoice!

Fr. Jim