"Stay with us, Lord"
2021-2022 Year of the Holy Eucharist, Diocese of Jackson

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (Year C)
December 12, 2021

I. Three threads woven throughout today’s readings reveal for us a tapestry of what it means to be a disciple. The first thread is “joy” or “rejoice.”
   A. Today is Gaudete Sunday – Gaudete means ‘to rejoice’. That’s why we light the rose-colored candle on our Advent Wreath. The purple candles remind us to repent, but the rose-colored candle calls us to rejoice. That’s why the priest wears rose-colored vestments. It is a time to rejoice.
   B. The prophet Zephaniah in the first reading calls out to the wayward children of Israel to rejoice and “sing joyfully.”
   C. The refrain of the Responsorial Psalm from Isaiah tells us to “Cry out with joy and gladness!”
   D. St. Paul in the letter to the Philippians also tells us to “rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!”
   E. What is this joy that the Scripture is speaking of?
   F. Henri Nouwen offers us some useful insight into the meaning of “joy” when he makes clear the distinction between “joy” and “happiness.” Paraphrasing Nouwen, he states that “happiness” is dependent upon external conditions, whereas “joy” is the internal certainty that we are loved unconditionally and that nothing can take that away.
   G. Today, then is the day to remember to rejoice, for nothing can take away the joy that comes to us in Christ Jesus.

II. And that’s the point of the second thread: Jesus is Coming!!
   A. Zephaniah tells the people of Israel to rejoice because “the LORD, is in your midst.”
   B. Isaiah tells us to cry out with joy because “for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.”
   C. St. Paul tells us to rejoice because “The Lord is near.”
   D. St. Luke records that John the Baptist tells his followers that “one mightier than I is coming.”
   E. The reason for our joy is that Jesus is Coming!! He is coming!!
   F. Our society has a very consumeristic attitude toward Christmas; it is easy to focus on what’s coming – Christmas – and not who’s coming – Jesus.
   G. Many people today are perfectly content to accept Jesus’ coming as something that happened long ago, and for them that’s ok if his coming remains in the past. Then there are others who believe he is coming again, but that’s sometime in the far-off distant future.
   H. As long as our culture can keep Jesus nicely domesticated, in the cute little crèche in our front yard, surrounded by images of lambs and doting parents, he is not really much of a threat, is he?
   I. But Jesus Is Coming!! – NOW – he has come; he will come; and he is coming.

III. Jesus is Coming – right here right now, but the world does not see it – the world is asleep! Why?
   A. This question takes us to the third thread in today’s readings: our mission to proclaim Jesus’ coming to everyone.
1. Isaiah tells us that we are to “acclaim his name among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name ... let this be known throughout all the earth.”

2. St. Paul tells us that our kindness should be known to all.

3. And clearly the gospel tells us of John the Baptist, the herald of the Lord.

B. Our job, our mission, the great commission given by Jesus charges us all with the responsibility to go and proclaim that Jesus is coming, right here, right now.

1. The laity, who make up over 99.99% of the Church, bear the greatest responsibility for bearing witness to Christ’s coming in their everyday environment.

2. The laity is charged with evangelizing the whole world, every aspect of it. We evangelize by how we do business; who we associate with; how we treat one another; how we deal with the troublesome; and so on –

3. But not by our actions alone. We must be willing to speak the truth. Because ultimately there can be no evangelization if the Person of Jesus Christ is not proclaimed.

4. Pope Paul VI states “Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word [Jesus] and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn” (EN, 24).

5. If we don’t proclaim Jesus’ Coming, then the world will remain asleep to his presence. We will have failed at our most important obligation as a Christian.

IV. Evangelization is not an option for any of us who seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ. So how are we preparing ourselves for the coming of Jesus? How are we preparing ourselves to proclaim Jesus to a world that is asleep? Do others see us filled with joy or searching for happiness in the rubble of a materialistic world?

Prepared by Deacon John McGregor