

**Homily – Third Sunday of Advent  
San Fernando Cathedral – December 17, 2023**

On this Third Sunday of Advent, the Church insistently invites us to rejoice. *Gaudete!* Even when the night in the world is getting longer, colder, and darker – both physically and metaphorically – God sends his messengers to announce good news. Our joy has a strong root, which pierces so deeply that it almost goes unnoticed, preparing the growth of the tree of life. God is in the midst of his people as a powerful Savior! He becomes so close to us that we risk overlooking Him. As the fulfillment of God’s promise springs forth, the year of the Lord’s favor must be proclaimed. His anointed One comes to fulfill the hope of all those who await God’s salvation with confidence. He renews Jerusalem out of love. Rejoice!

The passage from the Book of Isaiah – which we heard in the first reading – is the same one that Jesus proclaims at the synagogue in Nazareth, his hometown. It was originally addressed at the people of Israel, after their return from the Babylonian exile. They were recognizing the destruction of the temple, the city of Jerusalem and their identity, fighting idolatry and dealing with the people now inhabiting their land. As you may remember, the Lord finishes his proclamation of that passage saying: “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Lk 4:21). That same statement is true today. As members of the Body of Christ, you and I are, indeed, sent to “bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted,” and so on. The prophecy was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus, the Christ, who invites us to participate in his mission to announce the liberation, consolation and healing that He offers. Isaiah’s statement is not only the proclamation of our salvation, but that this salvation is received as we collaborate to extend it, reaching out to others in the name of the same saving love. Nothing from the past or the present can escape the fulfillment

of God's promise. The future is in God's hands, and there is no room in it for any vengeance, calamity, or bitterness. The new light, which is about to arise in our midst, will reach even the darkest corners. Rejoice!

Saint Paul's words to Thessalonians set the stage for us to prepare for Christmas. "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks..." Allow the Holy Spirit to speak not only to you, but through you! Bring glad tidings, heal, liberate, forgive and be forgiven! Discern, and make resolutions, retaining only what is good. "Refrain from every kind of evil." The Prince of Peace comes to establish his throne in your hearts, in your homes and communities. The Holy Spirit tells us, deep down in our hearts, that God is always on our side. For our joy to be invincible, we need to let the Holy Spirit keep our hope burning for the second coming of Jesus. We prepare the way of the Lord through prayer and works of mercy.

Pope Francis reminds us: (quote) *"The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence."* (end of quote). For us men and for our salvation, the only Son of God "came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became Man." The foundation of true joy is recognizing that the Holy Spirit is the origin of any good deed that you and I may be able to carry out. He is the Giver of Life who speaks God's Eternal Word through the prophets. John offered a baptism of repentance, preparing the way of the Lord. As Jesus was baptized, John was no longer just preparing the way, but participating in the way. Through Baptism, you and I were made prophets in Christ and for Christ. Prepare the way for Christ! Participate in the way through Christ! Be on the way with Christ! Rejoice!

May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us feel the tenderness of her care, giving us the courage to make room for her Joy to be born in us. Rejoice!