

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2023

# Third Sunday in Advent



## Gaudete Sunday

Today's Gospel reading: John 1. 6-8, 19-28

We hear again about John the Baptist. When John the Baptist is asked who he is and what his ministry means, he declares that his only purpose in life is to bear witness to the imminent arrival of the Messiah

The third Sunday in Advent is Gaudete Sunday. Today we light the pink candle in the Advent wreath. This is because pink, or rose, is a liturgical colour for joy.

“Gaudete” means “rejoice!” in Latin and comes from St Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, verse 4: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” These words may form the introduction to the Eucharist on the Third Sunday in Advent.

Advent is a “getting ready” season and people used to fast in this penitential season (go without rich foods as a sign of sorrow for their wrongdoing and as a way of drawing closer to God in prayer). Gaudete Sunday was a bit of a break day – a day of refreshment – during this time. So it was a day for rejoicing! We also rejoice - in the nearness of Jesus's return!

Our first reading today is from St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 16 to 24. It, too, begins with the word “rejoice” !

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”

We have every reason to rejoice! We are preparing to welcome Jesus as he comes to us again this Christmas so let's celebrate what is really important!



A prayer for the lighting of the third candle:

God our Father, you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age a son called John. He grew up strong in spirit, prepared the people for the coming of the Lord, and baptised them in the Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us, who have been baptised into Christ, to be ready to welcome him into our hearts, and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. Amen.



