

www.sjti.ac.za/resources_homily.htm

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18
Response: “**Sing and shout for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel**” (Is. 12:6)
Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6
Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7
Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

Last week the Word of God spoke of the frightening end of times. Today, the Word-made-flesh, now Risen Lord, gives us a sense of joy. We are expecting him in all his glory but already with us as a friend.

Zephaniah’s prophecy begins with a chant of doom but ends with a note of joy and celebration. God does not want destruction but restoration. He “**has repealed your sentence**” (Zeph.3:15) and “**renew you with his love**” (Zeph.3:17).

The prophet Zephaniah joyfully proclaims God as Lord of the dance. Why the dance? “**He dances with shouts of joy for you**” (Zeph.3:18). How amazingly wonderful and expressive is our God!

In this spirit the prophet Isaiah gives us the response of the People of God: “**Sing and shout for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel**” (Is. 12:6)

This song of praise, a Hallelujah, dramatically proclaims God as our savior, *Jeshuah* (Jesus), ויהי לי ישועה (*vayehi li liJeshu’ah*) which freely translates as “**the Lord became my salvation**” (Is. 12:2).

St. Paul says “**the Lord is very near**” (Philipp.4:2), right in our hearts and in our homes, and sees the Church as the joyful People of God. “**Be happy in the Lord**” (Philipp.4:4).

This joy comes from a supernatural peace and confidence, knowing God is in control. It is that “**peace of God which is much greater than we can understand and will guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus**” (Philipp.4:7).

To live as a Christian, John the Baptist answers the question, “**What must we do?**” (Lk.3:10). He admonishes us to be truthful, just and fair. We have to change our ways. This applies to all people in all walks of life.

We should be excited and full of expectation “**announcing the Good News**” (Lk.3:18) that “**someone is coming**” (Lk.3:16), someone very special in our lives.

Read the Good News (**Gospel**) for today and why we should rejoice.

The **Liturgy** for today is referred to as *Gaudete* (Rejoice) Sunday. Today is meant to be a joyful celebration.

Paul’s **Teaching** emphasizes the joy of being Church, the body of Christ and Christ dwells in us.

How much are we living the truth of our faith, expressing joy of the presence of God in us? (**Witness**)

FOR THE CHILDREN

Read how John tells different people to prepare for Christ. What does he expect of children? Help them to understand the Gospel.

See the Eucharistic celebration as a joyous occasion, for God and for his people. (*Liturgy*)

Teach the meaning of the word 'Gospel' also called 'Good News' or 'Glad Tidings.' (*Doctrine*)

Discuss and decide how we should be living our faith as a happy People of God. (*Witness*)

FOR TEENAGERS (*Christian Praxis*)

Name the Present Action: *What does Christian joy mean to you?*

Your Story and Vision: *Is it in you? Have you seen it in others, the Church?*

Church's Story and Vision: *How joyful and how sad is the story of the Church? Share Church experiences?*

Yours and Church's Vision: *How can you and the Church live the truth and joy of your faith, acknowledging the presence of the Lord and the building of His Kingdom?*

RCIA

Our Christian joy and peace lies in the fact that Christ is dwelling within us. We have the living experience of *Immanuel*, God-with-us. Advent reminds us of this truth of life and faith.

LIFE EXPERIENCE

Going back to my teenage years, my friend Terence was as devout as a Christian could be. He fell for Susan, an attractive girl whom we met at our school dance. She was not keen to dance with him and he asked her why she kept refusing him. She admitted that he was a good man but he doesn't smile. She wants to be happy. After practicing on how to make a good smile, he returned with such and asked "Are you ready now for a dance?"

To cut a long story short, their acquaintance led to courtship and marriage. Later they emigrated to Australia and sad to say, they were divorced. Had he lost his smile? Was there no more joy to life? When will he smile again or has he no "special moment in the wilderness of time?"⁽ⁱ⁾

P.S. I hear he is still as devout a Catholic as ever, but how happy?

(i) **I CHING**. Translated by **Stephen Karcher**. Vega, London. 2002. p.33.

I CHING is an ancient wisdom used in China over 3,000 years ago, reflecting upon events and interpreting them as oracles, reading the signs of the times.

LITTLE ANGELINA

I watched the happy faces of Angelina and her father. They were playing hide-and-seek in the garden and shouted for joy when they found each other. It was precious time for both of them and brought back memories of my own childhood. My teenage years also came to mind. I remembered the young lasses I danced with and my call to religious life. People wondered about my vocation. So did I. It could have been marriage or the priesthood. Either way is a blessing. God is in all his sacraments. The joy and wonder of it all is to be with the Lord and sharing his presence with others.

IMPORTANT WORD: *Χαίrete, Rejoice*

"Χαίrete" says St. Paul, which in Greek means 'rejoice, be glad, be happy.' It is clear that the cause of our rejoicing is not in ourselves but in the Lord. With this in mind, Paul writes happily from prison because he knows that the Lord is near. It is a spiritual happiness, a sense of being close to the Lord, like the one in love being with the beloved. One thinks of the beloved disciple on the breast of Christ, feeling the warmth and heart-beat of the sacred heart. What a great sense of nearness it brings. We experience the presence of Christ in many ways, viz. in the scriptures, liturgy, teachings and witness. Paul experienced Christ's love in the Christians of Philippi. "We are more touched by contact with holy people than by any number of sermons" (*Footprints of the Northern Saints*)⁽ⁱ⁾

(i) **HUME** Basil. *"Footprints of the Northern Saints"*. Darton, Longman & Todd. London. 1996. p.9.

Watchword: “**Rejoice in the Lord always**” (Philipp.4:4)

Greek: **Χαίρετε εν κυριω παντοτε.** Chairete en Kurio pantote.
Hebrew: **שמחו באדנינו בכל-עת** Simhu ba'Adonenu bekol-'eth.
Latin: **Gaudete in Domino semper.**
Spanish: **Regocijaos en el Señor siempre.**
Portuguese: **Regozijai-vos sempre no Senhor.**
French: **Soyez toujours joyeux d'être unis au Seigneur.**
German: **Freuet euch in dem Herrn allewege.**
Afrikaans: **Wees altyd bly in die Here!**
Zulu: **Jabulani eNkosini njalo.**
Xhosa: **Nimanye neNkosi nje, yonwabani!**
Sotho: **Kamehla thabang ka ho ba ho Morena.**