

Third Sunday in Advent B
December 17, 2017

Reading I: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

God has gifted us with a voice rejoice heartily

Responsorial Psalm: Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54

My spirit rejoices in God my savior

Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

God's will is for us to give thanks always and to pray and rejoice

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

God is the one among us whom we do not recognize, be mindful, focus.

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

My friends, today is Gaudate Sunday, the half way point of Advent. Well this year it is more like the 2/3rds point of Advent. The celebration of God with us is only 9/8 days away. Are you prepared?

In our Advent scriptures so far this year we have been called to vigilance, alertness, readiness, and repentance. For what purpose? So that our minds, hearts and spirits are in a place where we will not miss "God with us" as we work to give birth and voice to God in our world by proclaiming this good news to the poor, the heartbroken, downtrodden, the imprisoned, those addicted or held captive by any substance or media. The good news is that our God will bring righteousness into full bloom. That is right, you guessed it, through us who have or are working at preparing ourselves.

One of the things Becky has set up in our household is a "Gratitude" jar. Each day we are to consider what we are grateful for and write it on a note paper and put into the jar. I am not so good at the writing but when I do see the jar I do remember its purpose and at least mentally note my gratitude. It helps me to keep things in perspective and to have hope.

As I listen to our scriptures today, God is calling me to mindfulness. There is a parable told by Thich Nhat Hanh about the Buddha being asked by a man, "Sir, what do you and your monks practice?" he replied, "We sit, we walk and we eat." The questioner continued, "But sir, everyone sits, walks and eats" and the Buddha told him, "When we sit, we know we are sitting. When we walk, we know we are walking. When we eat, we know we are eating." (From book *Living Buddha, Living Christ*)

How often do we get so caught up in the things of our world that we lose track of what is truly important. A friend of mine told me a story about her this past week. She set out to boil up a dozen eggs so she would have something healthy to snack on during the week. After a little bit she had to be somewhere else so she left. When she was where she needed to be, someone mentioned eggs and she remembered she had not turned her burner off. She said her dog got quite a fireworks display and was still standing at focused attention on the stove when she got home to clean up the mess.

So I am saying to myself slow down, be mindful of God's presence in your life, prepare your heart to receive God's gifts, write down your gratitude notes, ready yourself to give birth to Emmanuel and pray always.

Most importantly for us today is that God has gifted us with hope, a gift we should share with others. There is so much bad news surrounding and bombarding us daily. The good news is that God offers us powerful gifts that we can use to face life's trials and suffering, life's losses and diminishments. We carry within us God's powers to bring good out of evil, meaning out of absurdity, order out of chaos, and even life out of death. Sinful and imperfect as we are, God still loves us and has sent His only Son not to condemn us, but to save and free us. Our identity is to be found in that enterprise, that calling, that project of God. People should recognize that is what we are all about as we face this world's trials and tribulations with a well-founded hope that God's ever present mercy and love can be born again in our life. We need to be mindful.

One last thought and then I'll shut up. Every December 17th the Church, that's us, celebrates the octave of Christmas with the "O Antiphons." Short simple prayers each night, summarized in the great hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." The first O Antiphon is celebrated on this day:

O WISDOM,

You came forth from the mouth of the Most High
And reaching from beginning to end,
You ordered all things mightily and sweetly.
Come and teach us the way of prudence.

Come Lord Jesus Come

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.