

3rd Sun Adv B

Introduction...

We are continuing on our Advent journey towards the brilliance of our Christmas celebration.

The Scripture readings again speak of the coming of our Savior.

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel

I Today's Scriptures

Isaiah speaks of the healing and liberation that our Savior will bring when he comes... and we will "heartily rejoice" in his coming.

Paul asks us to live a life worthy of our calling as we await the *final* coming of Jesus.

John the Baptist gives witness to the coming of the Messiah in his public ministry...

The long awaited Messiah who would bring God's kingdom to God's people.

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel

II Christmas Amnesia

Once again we see the Scriptures speak of the many ways Jesus comes... the Scriptures remind us that God is forever coming into our lives...

Christmas and Advent are a time of remembering for those of us who are tempted to forget...

We get so busy about so many things in the course of our daily lives that we tend to suffer amnesia...

we forget about God.

Many good people in our society have forgotten.

They seek their happiness and fulfillment, and the meaning of their lives, in so many *idols*...

We even have an American Idol!

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel

II Our Preparation for Christmas

We need Feasts like Christmas to remind us in our *busyness* that God is present in our lives,

that God has not forgotten about us,

and that God loves us and considers us precious.

I believe this is the *true* meaning of Christmas...

Christmas reminds us of God's powerful and passionate faithfulness to us and love for us...

Christmas is not *predominantly* about us and our gifts...

Christmas is about *God and God's gift* to us...

God's own son, Jesus.

- ❖ Our gifts are an echo of God, the gift giver.
- ❖ Our gifts show our love for others, as God's gift shows God's love for us.
- ❖ Our Christmas gathering with loved ones mirrors our Christmas gathering around the table of the Lord at our Christmas Mass, to receive God's Christmas gift to us at Communion time.

- ❖ The Christmas evergreen tree reminds us of God's faithfulness to us which lasts forever... "evergreen".
- ❖ The Christmas lights remind us of Jesus, God's light shining brightly in the darkness of our world. (John 1)
- ❖ Our Christmas hymns and carols remind us of the choir of heavenly angels singing on that first Christmas night, proclaiming the coming of Jesus.

We need these reminders...

for so often we forget about God in the midst of our busy, hectic lives.

We forget about God and the true meaning of Christmas as we scurry to buy our gifts,

get stuck in Mall traffic,

put up our Christmas lights and our Christmas trees –

of course nowadays we're supposed to call them "holiday trees" – lest we remember the true meaning of Christmas.

So many in our society seem to be suffering from *amnesia* when it comes to the true meaning of Christmas...

We're not even supposed to say "Merry Christmas"... it's more politically correct to say "Happy Holidays."

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel

III John the Baptist

In today's Gospel we hear the *witness* that John the Baptist gave to Jesus, and in the second reading Paul reminds us to live a life worthy of our calling as disciples of Jesus.

These Advent Scriptures remind us of Jesus' coming,
but also of our response as his disciples in our world today...

We are to give witness,
carrying the light of Christ in our world,
living the values and ideals of Jesus in our daily lives,
being people of compassion and forgiveness,
peacefulness and fairness...

It is our job to bring the light of Christ into our world, our family, our
neighborhood, our city and state...

I would like to share a story that gives us a beautiful example of this.

I remember once I was giving a Lenten parish Mission in one of our
suburban parishes.
I was touched by a one of Jesus' disciples... one of God's "little people".
She's not a celebrity.
She's not one of the rich and famous.
She's a widow, who lived in the parish, who went to Mass daily,
and who took communion to the people in a nursing home in her parish.

I accompanied her to that nursing home one morning,
a cold and windy winter morning...
and for me it became a *journey* up the mountain
with Jesus...
where I saw people transfigured momentarily
in the presence of compassion and love.

The woman bringing communion -
bringing Jesus, to the old and frail in the nursing home -
she knew all of their names, and they knew hers.
When she entered a room the people in the room looked up,
saw her,
and many of their faces lite up with a smile of recognition.

She would enter the room of the person about to receive communion,
go over to the person and give them a hug and a kiss on the cheek...
and greet them by name.
She introduced each one to me.

I told them who I was and that I was privileged to bring them communion on this day.

We prayed together... shared a bit of Scripture, said the Our Father, then they received the Body of Christ...

Afterwards we held hands, I blessed them, and we chatted when it was possible...

Then we moved on to another resident.

The woman I accompanied told me how she felt so blessed to be able to serve these little people of God, our brothers and sisters in the family of God.

She seemed to glow in the presence of these residents.

And so many of them responded with a smile

and with gratitude that she would visit them and bring Jesus to them...

We are all called to bring the *gift* of the *light* of Christ into our world today in whatever way we can... one person at a time.

Refrain... Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel

Conculsion

As John the Baptist did in today's Gospel, so must we do...

give witness by our words and our lives to Jesus,

and to the fact that we understand the true meaning of Christmas... God come among us.

As we come to receive the Lord Jesus at Communion let us pray that Jesus come into our hearts to enlighten us and to strengthen us to live the faith we profess, and to witness to our faith in our daily lives.

We can do this only with the Lord's help.

