

***“Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death...can shake our faith and become temptation against it...Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” (Catechism of Catholic Church, #164 & #165)***

**Fear not..., be not discouraged!**

Today, the 3rd Sunday of Advent is called the Gaudete Sunday. The name comes from the 2nd reading of Mass. (Gaudete in Domino Semper- Rejoice in the Lord always, Philippians 4:4-5). This Sunday lightens the penitential tone of Advent, encourages, and calls on us to share the joy of Christ coming. Thus, the 3rd candle of the Advent wreath is rose-colored.

Today's readings, in different ways, point to the tone of the celebration. God used other people to give his people hope, joy, and peace. In the first reading, Prophet Zephaniah calls on us as he called on the people of Israel to shout, sing, rejoice, and welcome the joy of God's presence in their midst. Similarly, St. Paul calls on us as he called on the Philippians to rejoice always because the Lord is close. The crowd, the tax collectors, and the soldiers in the Gospel asked John the Baptist what they have to do to share in the joy of Christ coming. John called their attention to the challenges of their different professions and encouraged them in many other ways.

The question: "what should I do" comes up constantly in the face of life situations. It is a healthy question that helps one find a solution to the challenges of one's life. In this season, the question has to be directed primarily to what one has to do to share fully in the joy and peace God has given us in Christ. The disappointments of life may put us in a tight corner to begin to think and feel that God is not near, but the truth remains that God is close to us, and he wants us to be near to him. He wants us not to live in anxiety, fear, or be discouraged. Instead, to live as St. Paul admonishes in the 2nd reading, "In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God." Let us always remember that the God we serve is a faithful one, he knows the best for us, and he will not fail us. Amen.

***“Lord, you are in our midst, we are called by your name. Do not desert us, O Lord Our God.”  
(Jeremiah 14:9)***