

Advent Joy!

Growing up as a child in the Eastern part of Nigeria, the 3rd week of Advent was usually the best week before Christmas for me for two reasons. First, it was usually when the school was off, and no school for the next three weeks. It was also a week that my parents took my siblings and me to buy new clothes and shoes for Christmas. As an adult, I learned that the third Sunday of Advent is a unique Sunday of the four Sundays of Advent. The 3rd Sunday of Advent is the *Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday*. This Sunday lightens the penitential tone of Advent, encourages, and calls on us to share the joy of Christ's coming. We also light the 3rd of the Advent Candles, which is rose or pink-colored. Thus, the readings of this Sunday in different ways invite us to share in this Advent joy.

The Prophet Isaiah (35: 1-6a,10), in our first reading, interjects the tone of joy at different parts of the reading. He points out the joy God's people will experience at the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah emphasizes that *"those whom the LORD has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; they will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee."* St. James (5:7-10), in our second reading, calls our attention to one of the important virtues we need in our Christian journey to share in this Advent joy: Patience. Joy is rooted in patience because patience brings peace, contentment, and hope. In addition, both John the Baptist's inquiries from prison about Jesus and Jesus' appreciation of the person of John the Baptist in the Gospel today (Matthew 11:2-11) call our attention to another important virtue we need to experience the advent joy, which is appreciating the gifts of one another.

As the Church invites us to experience the advent joy, the question we can ask ourselves should be, what is that in my life that takes away my joy? We can pray for the gift of patience that will help us to be patient with ourselves, with people in our life, and even patient with our God, trusting and believing that God knows the best and His time is the best. Also, we remember that gratitude blossoms into joy. Reflect on different ways God is calling you this season to rekindle the desire to appreciate his presence in your life and the beautiful gifts he has given you through the gifts of people in your life. As we continue our preparations to celebrate the joy of Christmas, let us ask the good Lord to help us to experience this joy and be instruments to share this joy with others. Amen.

Blessed Cyprain Iwene Tansi- Pray for us!