

Third week of Advent

(Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say to the Lord)

We are at the mid-point of the Advent season when we have been anxiously awaiting the coming of our Savior, not only as an anniversary of his birth but also when he comes again. I hope we have all spent the past two weeks in preparation for His coming, because there isn't much time left until we celebrate the great feast of the birth of our Savior. And for some there is a relatively short period of time before they will come face to face with our Savior.

This Sunday we light the pink candle on our Advent wreath. There was a time in the world when the color of something would tell you what was going on. For instance, the color of the other Advent candles are violet, that was the color for royalty, and most people refer to it as 'royal purple'. Red referred to 'victory', so when armies of old were victorious in battle, they would return home triumphantly wearing red.

The color pink was a 'joyous' color. Even today we dress little girls in pink because they bring such joy into our lives. We use this joyous color of pink today on our advent wreath to show our joy that this season of waiting for our Lord is half over, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel, when we will celebrate the great feast of the birth of our Savior.

Since pink is the color of joy, I am going to share with you a way to bring true joy into your life. All you have to remember is how to spell J O Y, what each letter stands for, and the order of the letters. 'J' stands for 'Jesus', and just as 'J' is the first letter of JOY, so Jesus should always be 'first' in our lives. 'O' stands for 'others', and just as 'O' is the second letter of JOY, we should always think of others 'second' in our lives. The 'Y' stands for 'you', and just as 'Y' is the last letter of JOY, we should always think of ourselves 'last'. Therefore, to bring true JOY into your life, always think of Jesus first, others second and yourself last.

John the Baptist in today's gospel was a good example of this. Last week we heard how John the Baptist was trying to teach others how they should repent for their sins as he was baptizing many at the Jordan River. Although he was being harassed by the Pharisees and Sadducees, he didn't think of himself first, but put the others spiritual well-being before his own comfort. He was also preaching to them to 'Prepare the way of the Lord'. Notice how he wasn't preaching about himself, but how important 'the one who is coming after me'



would be: how he wasn't even worthy to carry His sandals. what to do while waiting for the coming of the Lord. The answer of St. John is to challenge people generosity and sense of fairness so that others may have reason to rejoice. Give bread to the hungry and clothes to those who have none.

What shall we do while waiting for the coming of the Lord? First, act on people's needs. St. John asks the people to care and share. Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. We should provide help to a person in need, either material, moral or spiritual. It is because no one can say that he has nothing to share. St. John does not ask us to give everything we have but only to share like to adopt an abandoned baby or to offer a meal or visit a sick neighbor or to share in funeral expenses, to practice active love and compassion and to have social awareness. John is not asking for heroic sacrifices, like the martyrs who offer their lives for the Lord, or any extra or special projects but a helping hand, a foot that can go out of its way, an eye to see others' needs and an ear that hears a cry for help.

To end this, a philosopher once said that there are three types of people in this world: 1. the Dreamers who conceive bright ideas but remain in the world of dreams and ideas; 2. the Planners who translate their dreams into programs and resolutions but remain only on paper and 3. the Doers who undertake a task, put their heart and soul into it until it is completed.

Let us spend the remainder of this Advent season preparing 'our way' before the Lord comes this Christmas. Remembering always to keep Jesus first in our lives, others second, and ourselves last. Therefore, like John the Baptist, we can be a messenger sent by God to prepare others for the coming of the Lord.