

Third Sunday of Advent
December 11, 2011

Homily by Thomas Graf

May the Lord be in my heart and on my lips, that I might worthily proclaim His Holy Word. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

GAUDEAMUS!! LET US REJOICE!!!

Why GAUDEAMUS??? This is the THIRD Sunday of Advent and it takes its name from the Latin word GAUDETE---REJOICE.....which was the FIRST word of what was known in the early church as the INTROIT (ENTRANCE PRAYER) It actually would have read:

“GAUDETE IN DOMINO SEMPER: INTERIM DICO, GAUDETE”
“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS, AGAIN I SAY REJOICE.”

The INTROIT was actually much longer, but I will leave out the LATIN and just translate:

“LET YOUR FORBEARANCE BE KNOWN TO ALL, FOR THE LORD IS NEAR AT HAND. HAVE NO ANXIETY ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN ALL THINGS, BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKSGIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE KNOWN TO GOD.

So.....LET US REJOICE!!!! GAUDEAMUS!!!

But.....why? Why REJOICE, Why the Third week of Advent and the PINK candle? Why?

In the earliest years of the church, the only season was LENT...the 7 weeks prior to Easter. Lent was a season of fasting and prayer. The traditional colors of banners in the church during this time was a deep purple, signifying royalty, repentance, and suffering. During Lent, back then, the church lit 7 candles, one for each week of the SOLEMN SEASON. Yet, however solemn the season, the story of LENT still has a TWINGE of HOPE and JOY, since the death of Christ prefigured his RESURRECTION. So, on the THIRD Sunday of LENT, the church was encouraged NOT TO FAST, but to FEAST!!! In ancient times on this Sunday, the Pope would honor a citizen with a PINK ROSE...and as time passed, the priests wore PINK VESTMENTS on this day, as a reminder of the coming JOY.

When the SEASON of ADVENT was instituted the church viewed it as a mini-Lent. A time for reflection and repentance(Thus the PURPLE) In so doing the church adopted the first FOUR candles of LENT and changed the THIRD candle of ADVENT to PINK.

In some churches, each CANDLE is given a name: First—HOPE, Second—PEACE, Third—JOY (Today's) and the Fourth—LOVE. It has always seemed fitting to me that the third candle is the candle of joy, the one that speaks to us with a TWINGE OF COLOR.

GAUDETE SUNDAY....THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT...has also been referred to as ROSE SUNDAY...because it represents a LIGHTENING of the dark violet/purple of the rest of the penitential season of Advent. This LIGHTENING has TWO POINTS:

1. That of a GREATER LIGHT shining through the PURPLE to reveal the ROSE TINT signifying the coming of the LIGHT.
2. The other is a LIGHTENING of the MOOD, for which reason the church has traditionally ascribed this SUNDAY to the quality of JOY.

This Sunday is supposed to give us a GLIMPSE of CHRISTMAS, PRIOR TO THE FACT! That's why I love Mother Reid and Ben's ANNOUNCEMENT for their OPEN HOUSE-----A PEEK AT CHRISTMAS!!! If you have experienced the REID's PEEK AT CHRISTMAS....you realize that the name certainly is not misleading. The DECORATIONS.....MUSIC.....COMRADERIE.....not to mention the SWEET AND SAVORY TREATS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! And the WELCOMING of not only an OPEN HOUSE.....but an OPEN HEART!!! It kind of fills you with a REAL NICE SENSE OF THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT....unless you are a GRINCH!!

What is the CHRISTMAS SPIRIT? We all know when we seem to HAVE IT....and we certainly know when we DON'T!!!

I asked some of the people of our St. Faith's family what made Christmas special for them??? FOODS....SWEETS....DRINKS....EXPERIENCES....

A number of people mentioned...CHRISTMAS PUDDING!!!!!! Pat Robinson spoke about the English version which begins its preparation in OCTOBER....and little by little more RUM and WHISKEY is added. Then there's the Caribbean version that is BOILED outside on a wood fire...long and slow.....yum...yum...yum!

Some of the Italians in our parish family spoke Christmas LASAGNA, or 7 FISH DISH, while others relished fond memories of SAUSAGE & PEPPERS.....Andrea Frye clearly watering at the mouth shared about ANASETTE COOKIES and PASTA CONFETTI HONEY BALLS----naturally, non-caloric!!!

What about JAMAICAN RUM CAKE.....that delicious CRANBERRY SALAD..... Laverne Johnson spoke of CORN BREAD DRESSING and that reminded me of my mom's dressing with sausage/apples slow cooking Christmas day and each of us sneaking into the kitchen to savor morsels before dinner....others talked of PORK 7 SAURKRAUT, or that delicious CIDRA.

Our beloved Gloria Normann chimed in with MINCE MEAT PIE---my dad's favorite too

Barbara Sakora remembered the Czech favorite of VANOCKA BREAD (Kind of like a stolen, or hallah bread) Countless others spoke of EGG NOG and those delicious CHRISTMAS COOKIES of varied flavors and shapes.

What about ACKEE and COD FISH chimed in Marcea Paul, not to be outdone by Blanche's memories of EGGS and JOHNNIE CAKES.

Probably the most widely remembered and certainly most mouth watering drink far and wide.....that delicious SORREL, but some would certainly not mind a bit of GUAVA BERRY WINE.....ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

I remembered my family's annual jaunt from the BRONX to UPSTATE NY to cut down our CHRISTMAS TREE....what a wonderful day!!!!

GAUDATE SUNDAY is indeed a PEEK AT CHRISTMAS!!!!!!! A GLIMPSE of the LIGHT that CAME TO LIFE THAT NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM....

SO.....GAUDEAMUS.....LET US REJOICE!!!!!!!!!!

I was visiting someone in the hospital this week, her little girl (Priscilla) 4 years old, has been struggling with a LIFE-LIMITING ILLNESS. However, this was a GOOD DAY...when I walked in Priscilla was filled with emotion and did all in her power to show me her toys, etc. filled with JOY!!! Mom too...as she shared that the doctor's had brought good news that day. Mom then went on to tell me that PRISCILLA was her ADVENT BABY. She said that although there had been many struggles with her health, every DECEMBER there was something POSITIVE that happened. We then began to share about ADVENT and she shared with me a custom from her native country of NICARAGUA. She spoke of LA PURISIMA and LA GRITERIA (Translated The Immaculate Conception and the CRYING OUT) La Purisima being celebrated this week and La GRITERIA reminiscent of John the Baptist's CRYING OUT about the coming of JESUS. She shared that people would set up altars outside their home, with FRUITS/SWEETS/GIFTS and people would go from home to home and there was much FEASTING and FESTIVITIES. As people would arrive they would CRY OUT: QUIEN CAUSA TANTA ALEGRIA??? (Who causes such Joy??) and others would respond: MARIA... Y EL NACIMIENTO DE NUESTRO SALVADOR JESUCRISTO (Mary and the birth of OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JSUS CHRIST.)

As I drove away from the hospital, I thought....there is perhaps no better example of a person who knew the strength and the hope that comes from knowing God's loving care and presence, than MARY. How else could she have said:
MY SOUL MAGNIFIES THE LORD, MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD MY SAVIOUR."

Think about it for a minute...Mary knew God was with her....she knew she was loved...and in this she found courage and safety. She could handle anything and everything always in HOPE...never complaining...JUST PONDERING and TRUSTING

deep in her heart when things went wrong. MARY'S SPIRIT WAS ABLE TO REJOICE IN GOD...and God wants this same joy to be ours...yours and mine, so that we too can say to ourselves and all that we encounter on this life's journey...MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD MY SAVIOUR!!

This is Paul's message to us this THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT...as he said in today's letter...'BROTHERS AND SISTERS...REJOICE ALWAYS, PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS FOR YOU. DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT.'

When we accept God's love and comfort into our hearts that is truly when we have the abundance of the CHRISTMAS SPIRIT...but...not just during the CHRISTMAS SEASON...but EACH AND EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES!!!

In our Gospel we hear of a man sent by God, John the Baptist. A man who testified about the LIGHT...so that all might believe through him. As we hear John's testimony about the LIGHT, we are reminded that GOD IS WITH US
.....as we continue our LITURGY
....as we prepare to receive the PRECIOUS BODY AND BLOOD OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.
.....as we continue our PREPARATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS

MAY OUR HEARTS TRULY BE FILLED TO OVERFLOWING SO THAT THE TRUE AND HOLY SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS SINGS OUT FROM WITHIN US:

GAUDEAMUS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! LET US REJOICE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! AMEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!