

## Homily

3rd Sunday of Advent C 12.16.18

Fr. Todd Molinari

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday we come together to celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as “Gaudete Sunday” for Let us Rejoice in the Lord Sunday. This Sunday marks the midpoint of the holy season of Advent, where our attention now shifts to preparation for the first coming of God in his incarnation with the Birth of the Christ Child. We light the rose-colored candle and don the rose vestments, which symbolize joy at the expectation of the coming of God in the flesh of our humanity, and the hope that amid all of our sufferings and struggles, God gives us the necessary strength to prepare for his coming by purifying our souls of our own self-deceptions and attachments that distract us from the authenticity necessary for his coming that we see witnessed in John the Baptizer.

The Gospel this Sunday begins with the question the people ask John in response to his preaching a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”, which we heard last Sunday. The people ask, “What should we do?” Indeed, it is in the “doing” that displays our interior preparedness during Advent. I remember once, a few years ago, when I received an emergency call to give last rites to an elderly Hispanic woman in a nursing home. When I arrived, the family was there, and we gathered around the bedside and I led the prayers for anointing and Viaticum. The woman was very weak and could barely speak, but after I finished the anointing she said, please tell my grandchildren I love them and to practice their faith. That is what gave me strength.” She passed away shortly thereafter. I visited with the family in the room, and I glanced at a beat-up old rosary hanging on the side of the nightstand. I picked it up and placed it in her hands. I remember feeling awe in the presence of a holy object, almost like holding a relic in my hands. I sensed that that old rosary poignantly told the story of faith of that woman by pointing steadfastly and constantly at someone else, the Incarnate love of God in Jesus Christ.

The answer of the Baptizer shows the grace of the Christian preparation for God. With his answer: Do justice; correct error; right previous wrongs; begin again; live the commandments as if you authored them; - he made his life a living testimony. It was a “doing” that manifested his preparedness. That elderly woman, revealed in her threadbare rosary, reflected the burning hope and joy of John the Baptizer. It is that same grace that prompts all of us to speak humbly of our longed-for God coming in the flesh, where our baptism by water for the repentance of our sins will be fulfilled in the baptism by fire of experience and commitment to the ways of God incarnate who comes to dwell among us. Let us open ourselves to quiet prayer and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation during this week in Advent to live out those two baptisms.