

Third Sunday of Advent
December 13, 2009
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Good morning. Today is Gaudete Sunday. As we have said it means let us rejoice. If you listen to the readings today they have all got to do with rejoicing. The Gospel ends with, "He went and proclaimed what, the Good News. Not bad news, not better news, it was the Good News. The Greatest News there is. That the God of the universe through this prophet before Christ was made present preached Good News. When Christ came he preached Good News. What is Good News is that we are loved. If you listen to the First Reading the prophet Zephaniah, I love this from the prophet Zephaniah because he begins ... do you ever wonder what God does or who God is. If I ask what is God's humble opinion of you well some people would say well He loves me Father. And I would say you are a liar. But anyway, you would say that in your head. Most people I believe think that God is out to get them. Or He is mad at you because you sinned. Or He is disappointed. Or I am not good enough. Or fill in the blank. But that is not the Good News. This is what the prophet Zephaniah says that God is doing. He says, "The Lord your God is in your midst. He is a mighty Savior. He will rejoice over you with gladness and renew you in His love. He will sing joyfully because of you."

So what is happening at this very moment is we get a glimpse into heaven, God is rejoicing over you and He is singing because of you. Now the reality is sometimes He doesn't have cause for rejoicing does He because of us. But He still does. God rejoices because we have been redeemed in His Son. And as we have often said if we are going to live forever we have got to tell our faces. We have got to look like we are going to live forever. We have got to be people who are rejoicing because God rejoices over us, that He loves us. What we have got to do is get that perspective. When I went to Gannon I got my degree in counseling. I figured I didn't want a degree in philosophy because I thought what the heck is philosophy going to do for me in life. Priests, I think we have to have some kind of counseling. So the program at Gannon there was an undergrad in counseling when I was there. Gannon was very much Regerian or client centered and I hated client centered therapy. In client centered therapy or Regerian it is all client centered and you let the client talk for an hour and all you do is give positive feedback. Uh huh. Uh huh. Well, what you said was uh huh. Uh huh. Well what do you think you should do? Uh huh. Uh huh. You pay \$200 bucks for that. That drives me nuts. It is like excuse me I am paying you \$200 bucks, tell me what I should do. I was not very client centered. Did you know that? I have always been a directive type person. You have come to see me, okay. This is your problem. This is what you need to do. You got it? Do it. You are going to be fine. Don't do it and keep being in your pain, I don't care.

The reality is I believe in a directive approach. That is the way Christ is. He didn't say well what do you think about it. Well what do you think? Stop it. If we have the answer we have got to give the answer. So my favorite was two different therapies. One was reality therapy. In reality therapy you want to do what is best for the person even if they hate you because of it. Sometimes you have to say things to people that they might hate you for. But if you love them you are not concerned how they are feeling towards you. You are concerned about them getting better. The second one I really loved was rational emotive therapy. Because rational emotive therapy says what you think is what you feel. So if you think that

people are out to get you then you are going to feel a little paranoid. If you think that life stinks, then it does. Because whatever you think, anything you think is what causes your feelings about that reality. So if you have a bad thoughts going through your mind or negative thoughts your life is pretty much going to follow that. You are going to feel bad. You have got to change perspective.

In everything in life, in everybody there is a lot of good and a lot of bad. Some people focus on the bad, some people focus on the good. But what you focus on gives you attitude. So here when we are focusing on God, we can focus on the God who is going to be the judge; the God who is going to come again and judge the living and the dead. The God who says all the bad things in the Scriptures and of course they are there. We preach on it often. Or we can focus on what Zephaniah says today. That at this moment God rejoices over you. He sings because of you. If we could just reflect on that for a moment God rejoices over us. Right now He is rejoicing over you because He loves you; because you are here. Because though you are not perfect you are trying. He rejoices over you. He is singing because of you. He isn't like us. He doesn't have our moods, up and down. He is always the same. He is God. But think about it, your children they broke one of your prize possessions and they are only three years old, they don't know much and they break it and you can't find them. "Where are you?" You call them in and your kid starts sobbing uncontrollably. You say, "What is the matter?" And they start crying and say to you, "Oh daddy or mommy, you don't love me anymore do you?" "What?" "Well I broke something. I didn't mean to." Maybe I did mean to, you never know. "Will you stop loving me now?" If you are any kind of father or mother that would break your heart that your son or daughter would think your love was is so conditional, so conditional.

Well how much more the God of love does not have conditional love for us. He rejoices over us. When we start reflecting on God rejoicing over us then Paul says how we should respond to that. How does He say we should respond today in the Book of Philippians? "Rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord. And he says in case we didn't get it, "Let me say it again, rejoice." He not only says rejoice in the Lord, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Now that is hard, isn't it? Again it depends what our perspectives are. At Christmas I get crazy. Yesterday I had so much to do I was going out of my mind. Then I am hearing confessions. In the middle of confessions I remembered I have SNAK tonight. JOY! Do you know what SNAK is? All the kids come and they have an hour and a half of praise and adoration. So from about 7 o'clock till about 9:30 last night I am focused on God, hearing confession but my thing was I have got fifty other things to do. But God said excuse Me, shut up. Rejoice always. So we have got to refocus. Instead of thinking look at all of the things I can't do tonight or all of the things I have got to do or it is another thing to do think about all of the people you gave life to in confession. Think about how you can come into My presence. I, the God of the universe would humble Myself to come to a miserable sinner, Richards and let you come into My presence. Think about that.

You see it is a change of perspective which will change your mood. If it is a hindrance then it will pull you down. If it is a privilege to come into God's presence and to forgive people their sins it will lift you up. It is all perspective. Rejoice in the Lord always means you start focusing on the good things God does for you. It means you have a joyful heart. It means you have a heart filled with gratitude. And when those things happen He promises today in the Second Reading, "you will have peace." A couple of people pay

attention to the readings, I guess. The rest of you I don't know. You will have peace. So the question today is simple, do you have peace? Do you have peace in your heart? If the answer in your honest to goodness heart is no, I don't have peace then He is telling you how to do it. Rejoice. Think about how much God loves you and then rejoice in that. Then when you focus on how much you are loved, instead of the problems of the world that no matter what happens it is okay. You are loved. He rejoices over you. He is singing because of you. Do you have anything to worry about? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.