

## FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

Before delving into our reflection on this Gaudete Sunday, allow me to express my very sincere appreciation to the substantial numbers of parishioners that turned up for the penance service on Tuesday. Even with the generous hands of two other priests, we still had parishioners confessing after 9 pm. The recent turnout to parish activities has been very impressive. God reward you all!

My present joy synchronizes with our Liturgy this third Sunday of Advent which invites us to REJOICE! from the Latin, Gaudete! As a faith community, we validate this as we plan to celebrate St. Joseph the Worker's International Christmas party. If you have a cultural-traditional food dish you would like to provide, you can be sure that we all would enjoy sharing it at this event! As the Solemnity of the Birth of Our Lord draws closer, Gaudete Sunday helps rebalance us. Injecting joy amongst the more somber and penitential themes keeps us grounded in our ongoing preparations.

In today's First Reading, as we listen to the Prophet Zephaniah, a plausible understanding is that we are witnessing the Visitation, where Mary and her older cousin Elizabeth are exulting in the long-awaited fulfillment of the Messiah. Read from that perspective, we observe the shared jubilation that has nothing to do with any 'things' they might possess, but rather with knowing they are 'welcomed and loved by God.' [Pope Francis].

Further along in St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, we are reminded of that extraordinary kind of peace not often found in this world, surpassing intellectual understanding. "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God." What a grace that St. Paul's formula against anxiety comes at this time!

Our Gospel reading today may seem complex, with so many diverse matters surrounding St. John the Baptist. Providentially, St. John's business is with the coming of the true Messiah, plainly instructing all of us what it is we need to do to get ourselves prepared, especially at this time in the latter segment of Advent. John's approach to the three groups of crowds is hardly sweet or tender, neither does it communicate any sort of punishment, but fine-tunes their hearts towards that selflessness we are all called upon to exercise.

Having celebrated Our Lady's Immaculate Conception this past week, may we ask her guidance ushering us through the lingering Advent season; to imitate her generosity in making room in our hearts for Emmanuel. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice!"

Happy Gaudete Sunday!