**Gaudete Sunday – Latin** **15 December 2024**

* Once again, our Advent readings take us into the life of St. John the Baptist, the great herald of the Messiah’s birth.
* When we hear from St. John the Baptist in Advent, he is usually calling us to repent, to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight His paths, and to do so to ready ourselves for that day when we will have to face God and make an accounting of our lives.
* Making straight the way of the Lord is really another way of telling us that we must live lives of Christian integrity: loving God above all else and our neighbors as ourselves.
* We love God by obeying Him, by rendering Him proper worship and honor, by entering into prayer regularly so that we might be intimate with Him.
* We love others as ourselves by serving them, looking out for their best interests, and fulfilling their needs. In our Catholic context we speak in this regard about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
* Indeed, looking after others by performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy is integral to our life as Christians. In fact, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, showing mercy is the sum total of the Christian life re: our external actions.
* So, our lives should be marked by our willing and frequent practice of the works of mercy.
* Just as a reminder, the Corporal Works of Mercy are: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and burying the dead.
* The Spiritual Works of Mercy are: counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing sinners, comforting the sorrowful, forgiving offenses, bearing wrongs patiently, and praying for the living and the dead.
* These things should be habits for us – things that we regularly do. We should seek out opportunities to perform these works of mercy, and do them out of genuine love for God and neighbor.
* You see, showing mercy is so often a means by which we freely make up for what is lacking in another. Of course, we all have our deficits.
* For some, it may be a lack of material goods, which is where the corporal works of mercy are helpful. For others, it may be a spiritual good, such as a lack of faith, or a lack of knowledge. Or we may be in need of moral correction or forgiveness.
* In these cases the spiritual works of mercy are necessary.
* The point is that, as Christians, we are called to be our brothers’ keepers. We’re all called to give to others in some measure, to be generous with our time, talent, and treasure for the sake of others.
* While being generous can be painful at times, the fruit of generosity is joy! Giving to others to alleviate their needs makes us joyful!
* The Season of Advent is a particularly joyful time in the Church calendar, just as it is in the secular world. In the secular world this is a time of merry-making, of parties and gift-giving, a time to indulge in the good things of the world.
* But in the world of the Church, these weeks leading up to Christmas are a time of hopeful expectation, awaiting upon the salvation that comes from our Lord’s coming: both His coming as man at the Incarnation, and His coming again at the end of time.
* For those who believe in Him, there’s nothing more joyful than the coming of our Lord!
* This 3rd Sunday of Advent is a day of particular joy, for today is Gaudete Sunday. Think of the opening words of the Mass: *Gaudéte in Dómino semper: íterum dico, gaudéte*, “Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say, rejoice!
* These words of the introit for today’s Mass signal for us the tone of today’s liturgy. We’re given further evidence of the joyful tone of this day as our liturgical color switches from violet to rose.
* Normally in Advent we wear violet to indicate the penitential nature of this season. Yet now that we are roughly halfway through Advent, we take a break from our penance and rejoice in joyful anticipation of our Lord’s coming, much like *Laetare Sunday* in Lent.
* Yet while today’s liturgy encourages us to seek joy by reminding us that the great feast of Christmas will soon be upon us, as good Christians let us look for opportunities to provide joy to others rather than only seeking joy for ourselves.
* And there is nothing that provides greater joy than acts of mercy, both to the giver and the recipient.
* Brothers and sisters, we are just 10 days away from the joyful Feast of Christmas, the great celebration of our Lord’s coming as man to save us from our sins.
* While it is proper for us to restrain our appetites in this preparatory season through moderation and temperance in the face of the gluttony and greed that is so pervasive this time of year, this is no time to be downcast or depressed.
* To the contrary, we should be joyful even amidst our fasting and penances, with the sure and certain knowledge that by preparing in this manner, we will be all the more ready to receive our Lord joyfully when He comes as a tiny infant at Christmas.
* Moreover, let us be intent on doing good to those whom we can by our practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. For this is the best preparation we can make for our Lord’s second coming at the end of time, when He will come in glory and power.
* “Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say, rejoice! . . . For the Lord is near indeed.”