

## *Year B—Advent, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – 2014*

- Good morning on this third Sunday of Advent...and marking the fact that Advent is over half over, the third Sunday of Advent has been also known as "Gaudete Sunday" or "Rejoicing Sunday" ever since the time of Pope St Gregory the Great in the 500s.
- We light the rose-colored Advent candle today, because rose is the ancient traditional color of rejoicing...and reminds us of the dawning of day with the coming of Christ.
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- And besides Gaudete Sunday this weekend, a belated happy Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe...Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe...to all of you, as she is patroness of the Americas.
- It is such a beautiful thing for us to be able to celebrate two beautiful feasts of Our Blessed Mother so close together—Our Lady of Guadalupe on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and, of course, the Immaculate Conception on December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Both of these events are attested to in Church-approved apparitions of Our Blessed Mother—the Immaculate Conception in Mary's words and name for herself to St. Bernadette at Lourdes, and much more tangibly in the image of OLOG emblazoned on the tilma of St. Juan Diego—which is kept in the shrine in Mexico for any and all to behold.
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- Because we are so assaulted by frauds and fakes, the world tends to simply dismiss out-of-hand anything with a claim to a miracle or as having a supernatural explanation.
- One can dismiss easily if he wishes the testimonies of persons, no matter how trustworthy their reputations and impeccable their qualifications...but it's a lot harder to dismiss material proof, even though we do it all the time.
- The miracles the Vatican requires before canonizations? The documented healings at Lourdes? The tilma of St. Juan Diego? Almost totally ignored by the press or the secular world.
- In a world which grasps at all sorts of other-worldly and mysterious things, e.g., Bigfoot, alien landings, Ghost Hunters,

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etc...I can't help but wonder why (or rather, THAT) such miracles are hardly explored.

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- The tilma of Juan Diego is a type of apron or cloak, into which he gathered roses as directed by the Blessed Mother in this apparition—roses, by the way, which he found growing in December on a rocky hilltop in freezing weather and at high altitude, where they never would never be found growing otherwise.
- And when he dumped the roses from his tilma in front of the bishop, the famous image of OLOG shone in all its glory...as it does today.
- No one—even NASA scientists—has been able to explain how the image is on the tilma, how it was created, from what it is created, or why the tilma has not deteriorated...being simple cactus fiber cloth...and even now—several hundred years later—cannot be reproduced...and neither are there images like it before or after the apparition.
- In fact, there are many aspects of the image which cannot be reproduced even today with all of our technology.
- You may have heard about the images reflected in the eyes, the anatomical perfection of her eyes, the star map on her cloak, and other unexplained things about the image.
- A person might dismiss these things as creative interpretation, but combined with the indisputable historical fact that, before the apparitions, very few native Indians converted to Christianity...but after the apparitions and the touring of the image, they converted literally by millions, it becomes difficult to dismiss.
- What does the scoffer, then, have to be saying? That some human just happened to create an unprecedented and unexplainable image which had an unimaginable effect upon millions of people.
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- There will always be those who refuse to believe, regardless of any evidence. As is said about faith: For those who believe, no evidence is necessary; for those who refuse to believe, no evidence is sufficient.

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- As Abraham says of disbelievers in one of Jesus’ parables: “*They would refuse to believe, even if someone rose from the dead.*”
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- We are not required to believe in even the Church-approved apparitions of Our Blessed Mother...but, when you look at evidence, it’s awfully hard not to.

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▫ Now briefly about our beautiful reading from Isaiah this morning, focusing a moment on the first paragraph:

- *The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.*

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▫ As you know, the Hebrew word “mashiach,”—rendered in English as “Messiah”, and the Greek “Christus”, which we render in English as “Christ”, both mean “anointed”, or “poured upon”.

▫ The significance of being known as “the anointed one” is that both kings and priests (Hebrew: “cohanim”) were invested with their authority in a ceremony of anointing with olive oil.

- *(By the way, when you run into someone with the last name “Cohen”, he probably has some ancestry in Jewish priesthood, because that name comes from that Hebrew word for priest “cohanim”.)*

▫ Thus, inherent in the concept of “messiah” is the idea of being given priestly and kingly authority.

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▫ Now one thing for us to remember is that we, too, are “anointed”—with the oil blessed by the bishop before Easter (the “chrism”, or

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anointing oil) both when we are baptized and when we are confirmed...and, for priests, when we are ordained.

- What does this mean? That means that all the baptized—YOU—share in the priesthood and the kingship of Jesus—who is the “anointed” in the fullest possible sense of the word.
- The book of Revelation makes this plain: *“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Rev 1:5-6 RSV)
- And in 1 Peter we read: *“...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people...”*
- And why is that? 1 Peter continues: *“...that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* (1Pe 2:9 RSV)
- Does that not sound like Isaiah when he says: *He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD...”?*
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- We, as Christ’s disciples, share in that “anointing” of Jesus...and thus we, too, are called to go out and bring those glad tidings to those around us and in our lives—by word and example showing the love of Christ is a largely loveless world...bringing hope to world largely devoid of hope.
- God created each of us for happiness...for our happiness, and for His happiness...happiness only found through mutual love.
- Christ came for YOU...he came for ME—for no other reason than His love for us. So live in His love...you, who are the anointed of God.
- So...as St. Paul said in our reading today: *“May the God of peace make you perfectly holy, and may you entirely—spirit, soul and body—be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

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Reading 1

[Is 61:1-2a, 10-11](#)

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,  
to heal the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and release to the prisoners,  
to announce a year of favor from the LORD  
and a day of vindication by our God.

I rejoice heartily in the LORD,  
in my God is the joy of my soul;  
for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation  
and wrapped me in a mantle of justice,  
like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem,  
like a bride bedecked with her jewels.  
As the earth brings forth its plants,  
and a garden makes its growth spring up,  
so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise  
spring up before all the nations.

Responsorial Psalm

[Lk 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54.](#)

**R. (Is 61:10b) My soul rejoices in my God.**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:

**R. My soul rejoices in my God.**

the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.

**R. My soul rejoices in my God.**

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

**R. My soul rejoices in my God.**

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Reading II

[1 Thes 5:16-24](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

In all circumstances give thanks,  
for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise prophetic utterances.

Test everything; retain what is good.

Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy  
and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body,  
be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who calls you is faithful,  
and he will also accomplish it.

Gospel

[Jn 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

A man named John was sent from God.  
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,  
so that all might believe through him.  
He was not the light,  
but came to testify to the light.

And this is the testimony of John.  
When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests  
and Levites to him  
to ask him, “Who are you?”  
He admitted and did not deny it,  
but admitted, “I am not the Christ.”  
So they asked him,  
“What are you then? Are you Elijah?”  
And he said, “I am not.”  
“Are you the Prophet?”  
He answered, “No.”  
So they said to him,  
“Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us?  
What do you have to say for yourself?”  
He said:  
“I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert,*  
*‘make straight the way of the Lord,’*”  
as Isaiah the prophet said.”

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Some Pharisees were also sent.

They asked him,

“Why then do you baptize  
if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?”

John answered them,

“I baptize with water;

but there is one among you whom you do not recognize,

the one who is coming after me,

whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”

This happened in Bethany across the Jordan,

where John was baptizing.