

- Today is the third Sunday of Advent...called "Gaudete Sunday" or "Rejoicing Sunday" ever since the time of Pope St Gregory the Great in the 500s...a rejoicing because we are over halfway through Advent and coming soon to the end of our waiting and to the birth of Christ...He who is the only source of the true, lasting joy.
- 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 also...a belated happy Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe to all of you; she is patroness of the all the Americas.
- We're fortunate to celebrate two beautiful feasts of Our Blessed Mother so close together—Our Lady of Guadalupe on the 12th, and, of course, the Immaculate Conception on December 8th.
- 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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- Well...on this "Rejoice Sunday" we hear John the Baptist proclaim: *"that the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire."*
- Doesn't sound awfully joyful to me. What's up with that?!
- Well...what is chaff? Chaff is the useless hulls of harvested grain. The dictionary defines it as *"worthless matter, or refuse, good for nothing but to be burned"*...while the kernel of the grain—that which is good and nourishing and desired—is gathered into the barn.

- Spiritual “chaff” of humanity are those who refuse to fulfill the purpose for which God created them—to love Him, and to love our fellow man in charity and kindness.
- The “chaff” are those who endlessly take without giving...those who care nothing for the good of others, seeking only their own pleasure and comfort...regardless of how it affects others.
- In other words...the “chaff” are those who care not to seek the good...to seek Jesus Christ in word or deed—He who is our Redeemer from sin, but also the perfect example of human life, and who demonstrates the perfect fulfillment of human person.
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- WE are not placed upon this earth in a vacuum—to fulfill our own desires to the neglect of others.
- We are created to serve God and each other...and if we fulfill this purpose well, to receive a reward of eternal happiness enfolded in God’s embrace forever.
- And the way we serve is by following the two great commandments: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.
- And because God is love, what does that mean except to: 1) acknowledge and return to God the love that He has so abundantly given to us--as imperfectly as we do—and also: 2) to reflect God’s love...to be God-LY...towards others...to follow the example of Jesus and give of ourselves to others as He gave even His life to us in His death on the cross.
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- God does not plant good seed in order to harvest chaff...and likewise we are NOT created to be useless matter, but rather we are to be the kernel of the grain...to do the will of God, which is by definition what is the Good and the Beautiful.

- Kindness, modesty, gentleness, thoughtfulness, courage... love... all of these virtues grow only through our conscious effort to cultivate them.
- Many people may never buy a Bible. They may simply know that you are Christian, and you may be the only Gospel they ever read.
- If we do not pull the weeds from a crop, they choke the good...and if we do not pull out the weeds of selfishness and hatred, arrogance and immodesty from the fields of our souls, the virtues of beauty will be choked out...and we become nothing but chaff...fit only for burning.
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- And as a child of God, in His image, He gives YOU the grace to overcome evil and to do what is good and right in following His Word...not to live on an animal level of immediate pleasure and pain, but to love Him above all, and to love your neighbor.
- It is the work of a lifetime. A field is cleared of weeds row by row, and sometimes it seems that two more come up where one is pulled.
- But...as you clear the field, God sends His grace to you—very often in the form of helpers who will help you tend your field...for the work seeking virtue is not task of one person by himself, but comes about through the help of all of your brothers and sisters in Christ.
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- So, as Christmas approaches, heed Isaiah: “*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good...*”. (Isa 1:16-18)
- God the Father is the best of parents...He wants only what is good for us...he longs for us to be with Him with an infinite longing.

- Many people fear God...but there is no need if we live in Him...
- ...for, as St. John writes: *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us.”* (1Jo 4:16-19 RSV)
- How do we love God? John the Baptist knew it and preached it, and St. John wrote it: *“This is the love of God...that we keep His commandments”*...the teaching and example of Christ, and love each other as He loves us.
- That is beauty. That is Goodness. And THAT is what leads us to everlasting life in the embrace of God’s love...forever.

Reading 1

[Zep 3:14-18a](#)

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!
Sing joyfully, O Israel!
Be glad and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
The LORD has removed the judgment against you
he has turned away your enemies;
the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,
you have no further misfortune to fear.
On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!
The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a mighty savior;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
and renew you in his love,
he will sing joyfully because of you,
as one sings at festivals.

Responsorial Psalm

[Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6](#)

R. (6) Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;
let this be known throughout all the earth.
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Reading II

[Phil 4:4-7](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice in the Lord always.

I shall say it again: rejoice!

Your kindness should be known to all.

The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,

by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,

make your requests known to God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding

will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel

[Lk 3:10-18](#)

The crowds asked John the Baptist,

“What should we do?”

He said to them in reply,

“Whoever has two cloaks

should share with the person who has none.

And whoever has food should do likewise.”

Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him,

“Teacher, what should we do?”

He answered them,

“Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.”

Soldiers also asked him,

“And what is it that we should do?”

He told them,

“Do not practice extortion,

do not falsely accuse anyone,

and be satisfied with your wages.”

Now the people were filled with expectation,

and all were asking in their hearts

whether John might be the Christ.

John answered them all, saying,

“I am baptizing you with water,

but one mightier than I is coming.

I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor

and to gather the wheat into his barn,

but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Exhorting them in many other ways,

he preached good news to the people.