

- As we know, there was a lot of debate in the early church about whether Jesus or John the Baptist was the Messiah—even though John himself repeatedly assured others of his own inferiority and pointed others to Jesus.
- “*Behold the Lamb of God!*” John told his own disciples, pointing to Jesus...including Peter’s brother Andrew, according to John’s Gospel.

-
- Secondly: a belated happy Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the all the Americas.
 - We have two beautiful feasts of Our Blessed Mother 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 Mary—the Immaculate Conception in her own words and name for herself given to St. Bernadette at Lourdes, and much more tangibly in the image of OLOG emblazoned on the tilma of St. Juan Diego—kept in the shrine in Mexico for the world to behold.

-
- Now today, the third Sunday of Advent, is also known as “Gaudete Sunday” or “Rejoicing Sunday” ever since the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great in the 500s...rejoicing because we are now over halfway through Advent, and the birth of Our Lord is near... He who is the source of true and lasting joy.
 - The rose-colored Advent candle today reminds of the coming dawn of the eternal day with the second coming of Christ.
 -
 - And on this “Rejoice Sunday” the Church gives us readings of rejoicing from the prophet Zephaniah: “*Be glad and exult with all your heart...The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior...[He] has removed the judgment against you...He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in His love, He will sing joyfully because of you...*”

- The judgment of which Zephaniah speaks is, of course, the righteous judgment of God required to fulfill justice...to balance the scales of justice against the injustices caused by the world's sins...in which each of us has a hand in one degree or another.
- But the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ, comes to give Himself "before the court", as it were, in our place...accepting even an agonizing crucifixion which atones for the world's guilt of selfishness, criminality, hatred. Evil.
- Such vicarious atonement is provided for those who repent from wrongdoing and seek the way of goodness that Christ has shown to us as best they understand.
-
- Those who knowingly refuse goodness and the love of God and neighbor are that chaff that John the Baptist rails against when he says today: "...*the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire,*" reminding us of Jesus' parable of the weeds growing among the wheat, and the angels are told: "*Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.*" (Matthew 13:30)
-
- What is chaff? In our day, walk behind any grain harvester and you'll find out quite quickly.
- 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 desired—is what is of value, and gathered into the barn.
-
- Such admonitions in scripture are not meant to drive us as fear tactics from a tyrant, but rather serve the dual purpose by informing mankind about our obligation as God's creatures and

children of goodness laid upon us—following the word of God... as well as acting as a warning to the willfully evil...the recalcitrant, stubbornly unrepentant sinful man.

- For when the Archangel tells Mary that “nothing will be impossible with God”, he speaks of God’s work in creation...for, in reality, there are many things impossible with God, in that He cannot NOT be what He IS...cannot go against His own nature.
- He cannot NOT be a Trinity, eternal, omnipotent, all-knowing, all truth. As the Catechism tells us: He can neither deceive nor be deceived. (CCC 156)
-
- And one thing that God cannot be is unjust...for God IS justice itself.
- This is why God does not—cannot—simply dismiss sin, for that itself would be injustice...letting injustice tip the overall scale.
- And yet by His mercy and love He Himself fulfills justice ... transferring to Himself the guilt and punishment of sin...suffering as man, yet suffering infinitely as God against the infinite offense against the infinite God that all sin is.
- THIS is the cause of our great rejoicing...the cause of our celebration...that Our Savior comes in God’s love to redeem weak humanity from a debt it could not hope to pay.
-
- Was crucifixion strictly necessary? No; because Jesus is infinite God, even the slightest suffering would have been sufficient.
- But He allows Himself to suffer what is among the greatest tortures on earth in order to demonstrate to us: “This is how much I love you. This is what my love will give for you.” Adding the plea: “Please accept my love.”

- This is why St. Paul tells the faithful Christian today: *“Have no anxiety at all, but...by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God”* ...for as Paul says in another place: *“He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?”* (Romans 8:32)
-
- So, as Christmas approaches, let us heed the prophet Isaiah: *“Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean...cease to do evil, learn to do good...”*. (Isaiah 1:16-18)
- 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...We love, because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:16-19)
- How do we love God? St. John wrote: *“This is the love of God... that we keep His commandments”* ...and as Jesus Himself says: *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments...He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”* (John 14:15, 21)
- And in doing so, as we heard from Paul today: *“...the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

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.