

**Third Sunday of Advent – Year B**  
**(Dec. 14, 2008)**

**Rejoice!**

Rejoice, we are told on this third Sunday of Advent. Paul says, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Always give thanks to the Lord.” Traditionally this third Sunday of Advent has been called “Rejoice Sunday,” Gaudete Sunday. Even Isaiah gets into the act in our first reading saying “I heartily rejoice in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul.” And we sang Mary’s Magnificat as our responsorial Psalm and repeated over and over, “My soul rejoices in my God.”

Pardon me now if for just a couple of minutes I seem to get a bit gloomy on this Rejoice Sunday, but I can’t help but wonder how much joy Isaiah or Mary or Paul would feel if they were alive today and listening to the news on television, reading about it in our papers, or hearing it on the radio. There seems to be more bad news than good news: Unending wars, etc.

In our first reading today we heard Isaiah say, “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication from our God.” You recall, I’m sure, that this was the passage Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth and claimed it as his mission in the world, his vocation, what his life would be all about. It is the foundation for the Church’s social ministry. From the beginning the Church has had special concern for those in need. That same spirit of the Lord is upon us as well, inspiring us, encouraging us, strengthening us to continue the work begun by Jesus.

And that is why, in spite of all the bad news I mentioned at the beginning I am optimistic. I have hope. That is what our Advent attitude must be. It must be one of hope. Hope, you know, is based on promises, promises that we know will be fulfilled. Our hope is that the God who loved us so much that he sent his only son will continue to be with us. Jesus is still Emmanuel. He will continue to love us, to strengthen us, to call us, to

challenge us, and to give us the courage to respond and follow him. He will give us the grace to do. I am convinced. I have hope. And along with Isaiah, Mary, and Paul I can rejoice. Together we can all rejoice, we can heartily rejoice in our God and say with Isaiah, "In my God is the joy of my soul."