

'GOD DANCES WITH US IN JOY AND LOVE'

3rd Sunday Advent 16th December 2018

WITH JOY IN OUR HEART WE CELEBRATE OUR LOVE FOR JESUS.

We celebrate within and across many cultures such as

- In some places in Africa, dancing the Christmas story
- The Christmas crib in churches and town squares in parts of the world
- The singing of Christmas Carols televised and on social media

BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH 3:14-18

Let us remain with the image of dancing for a moment.

In today's First Reading, it says,

"Rejoice and exult with all your heart"

Twice it reminds the people:

"The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;"

"The Lord, your God, is in your midst"

And God does not merely observe us.

"he will rejoice over you with gladness,

he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing

as on a day of festival."

EXULT | DANCE

The word translated "exult" is also translated as "dance"

Some cultures better understand what it is like to joyfully dance over someone.

They are used to this image from their own festivals.

IMAGINE GOD - A PRAYER INVITATION THIS WEEK

Let us pause for a moment to imagine God joyfully and lovingly dancing over us. [pause]

You are invited to bring this experience to your prayer each day, between now and Christmas.

ST. PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

In the Second Reading, St Paul says:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."



Again we hear that the Lord is near.
And we rejoice.
Not only God rejoicing over us,
but we are invited to rejoice,
with our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

VATICAN CHRISTMAS CONCERT 2018

Last week a priest from Iraq phoned our parish to share great joy.
His was that a choir of Christians from northern Iraq would be singing at the Vatican Christmas Concert this year.
Along with many guest artists from other nations.

The joy of expectancy – of travel, of solidarity,
of representing your families and towns,
of being part of the wider family of God.

And not only singing and being together, but another surprise.
One of the foci of the Vatican Christmas concert
would be their story of survival in northern Iraq since 2014.

Now a people who have survived can tell their story and sing to God.
The Vatican Concert program says of those who will benefit.
*'The second will benefit **Scholas Occurrentes** who educate children in Erbil,
in Iraqi Kurdistan, where 130,000 Christians are refugees.'*

In the many challenges they face today in rebuilding their lives,
they still have this wonderful opportunity
to be fully human and rejoice before God.

OUR PARISH CAROLS

Thank you to Phil and all the artists preparing for next Saturday night's Carols.
Come along and rejoice.

Phil explains:

*'Our carols will be simple and elegant.
Our church was designed for us to be gathered around in community,
to participate, and to encourage each other in our celebration.
For this year's carols, we'll be gathered around the singers and musicians
as a community in the church.
It will be much less a concert, and more of a sing-along.
We'll begin at 7.30 on Saturday night,
and finish before 9.00, and enjoy tea and cake afterwards'*

Whatever is happening in our lives, let us take time to rejoice.
And to acknowledge others in our lives.
Before that beautiful passage above from St Paul,
he asked for help for others.

“Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

WHO IS PLACED IN OUR BOOK OF LIFE?

GOSPEL OF LUKE 3:10-18

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist is asked is question
‘What then should we do?’

He reminds them to share what they have.

*‘Whoever has two coats
must share with anyone who has none;
and whoever has food must do likewise.’*

The conversations deepened to include an ethical focus on one's job.
Tax-collectors come forward to be baptized and ask
‘Teacher, what should we do?’

John responds:

‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’
Soldiers ask, *‘And we, what should we do?’*
John replies *‘Do not extort money from anyone
by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’*

HOW DO YOU THINK JOHN WOULD REPLY TO YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION?

TO YOUR VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION?

Let us pause and reflect on what we do. [pause]

The Gospel continues as John the Baptist reminds the crowd,

*‘I baptize you with water;
but one who is more powerful than I is coming;
I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor
and to gather the wheat into his granary;
but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’*
*So, with many other exhortations,
he proclaimed the good news to the people’*

John the Baptist points humbly to Jesus.

HOW DO WE POINT HUMBLY TO JESUS

- IN OUR OWN WORK,
- IN OUR SERVICE, AND IN VOLUNTEERING,
- IN OUR MINISTRIES AND LIFESTYLES?

Once we place all before God, humbly,
we can be find it easier to rejoice
and respond to God dancing over us.

Let us dance with God this Advent. In love and Joy.

Amen.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/121618.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook16122018>]

Image: God dances with us in Joy and Love - created 16 December 2018 www.stjosephsbrackenridge.com

