

THE BLESSING OF JOY ON GAUDETE SUNDAY

Third Sunday of Advent – 11 December 2022



CHALLENGES

Following on from the Queensland Churches Together resource on Domestic Family Violence Prevention, from which we have quoted in the last two homilies and in the parish newsletters, we continue this weekend with this quote about *Letter of James* and the *Gospel of Matthew*.

James:

While the farmer patiently waits for the crops, he does not sit idle. He prepares and protects the vulnerable crops from harmful and destructive things. In the same way we wait patiently preparing and protecting those who are vulnerable.

Matthew:

Jesus is the Messiah who will bring healing to all. John came before him to prepare the way for him. While we wait for Jesus the Christ to bring healing today to the oppressed, abused and suffering, who will take on the role of John and prepare the way for Christ to come? We hear Jesus say that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he (11:11). I wonder if Jesus is talking about us preparing the way for the Christ."

POPE FRANCIS

Three days ago, several media outlets, including [Vatican News](#), picked up the video of Pope Francis praying for Ukraine and the world on December 8th.

[Full text of Pope Francis prayer may be read [here](#)]

He was moved to tears for the suffering of the people of Ukraine.

[Extract from Vatican News YouTube video [here](#)]

This weekend and next weekend we collect for Ukraine at the conclusion of Masses.

Each Mass this weekend, we begin with a prayer for Ukraine, provided by the Australian Bishops. The prayer is on the last page of this homily.

We pause and reflect now, on what are the challenges we face in our own lives. **[pause]**

JOY

The third candle of the Advent Wreath is now lit.

It is the candle of Joy.

Let us explore the fruit of joy, a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22

[ISAIAH 35:1-6, 10](#)

In today's First Reading from the Book of Isaiah, he unfolds a depth to joy.

- Letting creation rejoice
*"Let the wilderness and the dry lands exult,
Let the wasteland rejoice and bloom.
Let it bring forth flowers like jonquil,
Let it rejoice and sing for joy."*

We ponder our own lifestyle and relationship with God's creation.

We ponder our choices and preferences.

We ponder our awareness of, and care for the earth, our common home.

- The joy of God's healing
*"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
The ears of the deaf unsealed,
Then the lame shall leap like a deer
And the tongues of the dumb sing for joy".*

We ponder the healing power of God in our lives.

- Celebrating the return from bondage.
*"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."*

We ponder what imprisons us in life.

We ponder our return to living in the freedom and joy of God's love.

SAINT PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

We ponder today about our faith community.

We draw inspiration from St Paul's letter to the early Christian community of Philippi.

We open our hearts to the spirit of joy as we recall St Paul's words.

"constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you," 1:4

*"Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain
and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith,"* 1:25

“make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” 2:2

“... I am glad and rejoice with all of you and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.” 2:17-18

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.” 4:1

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” 4:4

“I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it.” 4:10

LETTERS OF JOHN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We continue to reflect on Christian joy as we turn to the letters of John.

We ponder how our joy may be complete.

We ponder the relationship between joy and truth.

“We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” 1 John 1:4

“I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father.” 2 John 4

“Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.” 2 John 12

“I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” 3 John 4

MATTHEW’S ACCOUNTS OF THE MAGI & TWO PARABLES OF JOY

We turn to Matthew’s accounts of the Magi and two parables of joy.

In Matthew 2:10 we note that the journey of the Magi has reached its destination as they arrive in Bethlehem.

*“When they saw that the star had stopped, they were **overwhelmed with joy**”*

Matthew 13:44 Jesus compared the kingdom to treasure.

*“**The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**”*

In Matthew 18:13 Jesus tells a parable, expressing the joy of the shepherd, who found the lost sheep.

*“**truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.**”*

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 11:2-11

We have opportunities in our nightly *Examination of Conscience* to look back on each day in prayer.

John the Baptist was held captive in prison.
He pondered if his mission had been accomplished.
He heard of what Jesus was doing.
He sent his disciples to see if Jesus was the Messiah,
the One John was called to prepare his way.
Imagine the inner joy of John when he heard from his disciples about what Jesus said.

Jesus said to them,

**“Go and tell John what you see and hear:
The blind receive their sight,
The lame walk, the lepers are cleansed,
The deaf hear, the dead are raised,
And the poor have good news brought to them.
And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.”**

In Matthew 11:10 the NRSV translation says,

***“See I am sending my messenger ahead of me,
who will prepare your way before you.”***

The phrase *“ahead of me”* is a translation of the Greek *“pro prosopou sou.”*
Literally it means *“before (the) face of you”*.

God’s messenger is before your face. Close and intimate.
Our ministry is before the face of others.

Such a ministry is about love.
About being present to them.
About accompanying them.

And within us, living joyfully, in communion with the presence of God.

Let us rejoice together.

Amen.

Father Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/121122.cfm>

PRAYER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN UKRAINE

God of peace and justice,
who change the hardened heart
and break the power of violence,
we entrust the people of Ukraine to you.

Protect them in this time of peril;
let them know not death but life,
not slavery but freedom.

You are Father of all;
we are brothers and sisters.

Give us the strength
to live that truth in love,
choosing peace not war.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Australian Catholic
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