

Gaudete 2017

Two altar servers were waiting for mass to start when father came out of the sacristy dressed in Gaudete Sunday vestments, one altar server said, look Father is wearing pink today, which the other server said it's not pink it's rose. How do you know? Said the first server, because Jesus rose from the dead he didn't pink. Today is Gaudete Sunday. The term comes from the Latin opening words of the introit /entrance antiphon/ chant,

The Chant is:

Phil 4: 4-5

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

"Gaudete in Domino Semper," which is Latin for the introduction of Philippians 4:4, *"Rejoice in the Lord always."*

The theme of this day expresses the joy of anticipation as we blush with excitement at the approach of the Christmas celebration. In Rome they call it "Bambinelli" Sunday, when children bring their statues of the infant Jesus from their nativity sets at home to be blessed by the Pope. Today is about joy, not just happiness or fun. In her wisdom, Holy Mother Church reminds us of the difference between joy and happiness. The holidays do bring us happiness that comes from fun and friends and a full belly of feasting, but it's not the same thing as Christian joy.

Pope Francis says-

"To be happy is good, yet joy is something more. It's another thing, something which does not depend on external motivations, or on passing issues: it is more profound. It is a gift."

A true gift is something we can't anticipate or expect. Joy is simply a gift poured out from heaven on to us by God. If we stop for a minute and think about it, we can sense God pouring joy into us and around us. If joy is a gift from the Lord, then the Lord Himself is our first and greatest gift, and the only one that will never tarnish or break or fade. Gaudete – said "Gow-DAY-tay" – Sunday reminds us that the gift has not yet arrived, but it's very near. The Lord reminds us today in St. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians to stay optimistic. To be a people with a glass half full rather than half empty.

The Thessalonians were worry warts always wondering about the "what ifs" in the future and the "should haves" in the past. St. Paul says to rejoice always and in all circumstances give thanks. Some of us hear that and think, I can rejoice when the economy is good, the right Politician is in office, my children are perfect and I have more FB friends than Kim Kardashian. That's not joy, it may be happiness or fun but it's not joy. Joy is when I can allow Gods presence to fill my presence even when there is unhappiness surrounding me. So even though we may be having happy times during Advent, Gaudete Sunday is a time to stop and reflect on the source of *true* joy. If the Advent season has caused stress or sadness in our life, then lighting the rose candle is an opportunity to refocus on what the Mass of Christ is all about. Christ's Mass. Christmas for short, is about true joy. Even when events in our life are bad, rocky or worse, we are to also give thanks in those circumstances too.

Christians are called to a higher response, to a deeper joy, and not to not Surrender to circumstances that want to steal your joy. Remember How the Grinch that stole Christmas from the citizens of Whoville? Surely The Who's must have been practicing Catholics. As the Grinch stood atop Mount Crumpit with all of the Who's Christmas goodies piled high on a sleigh, ready to be dumped. When up from Whoville, divested and robbed of all its holiday decorations and good food, and presents, came not cries of sadness nor shouts of anger but the sound of sweet singing.

*"And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow
Stood puzzling and puzzling, 'How could it be so?
'It came without ribbons! It came without tags!
'It came without packages, boxes or bags!
And he puzzled three hours, 'till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
'Maybe Christmas,' he thought, 'doesn't come from a store.*

'Maybe Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more!'

A little bit more indeed, Mr. Grinch.

Next weekend, because Christmas Eve falls on Sunday, we will have two extra masses but not in the order that we are used to.

Saturday at 5pm will be the usual vigil Anticipated Sunday mass which counts for your Sunday mass which is the 4th week of advent.

Sunday morning will be one mass at 9am. There will be no 8am or 10:30am mass. Please tell our absent brethren, as we say.

Christmas Eve, Sunday evening, two masses: 5pm and 10:30 pm.

I would strongly encourage you to come to either 10:30pm or 10am as 5pm will be standing room only.

Christmas Day Mass will be Monday morning at 10am mass.

Depending on your attitude, if you are a Thessalonian, then you are "required" to attend mass twice.

If you are like a Catholic from Whoville then you **rejoice** at getting to attend mass twice. Mass schedule next weekend is very different, read the bulletin and website. Please pray for the parish clergy, staff and stewards as they get ready for Christmas liturgies. If you would like to be a good steward of your time and help us set up for Christmas meet after the 9am mass in the church Sunday morning. Also remember to give your church a financial Christmas gift. Not only are Churches still the best tax deduction, it really helps the parish financially recover from the extra holiday expenses. Remember, we will have visitors here for the first time in a long time or maybe ever. Please be a good disciple and welcome them here like you would welcome Christ into your home. Be an ambassador for SJN. Give them the best seats. If they look lost Give them a smile and directions and Don't be a Grinch.

And when they Grinch at you remember-"Gaudete in Domino Semper," "Rejoice in the Lord always."