

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 his sandals." Words from our Gospel today from the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

Did you know that expectation is the number one cause of stress in the work place? It makes a lot of sense really... There are a number of competing expectations that are placed upon us: what our company expects from us, what our many bosses expect from us, what our co-workers expect from us, what our customers expect from us, what we expect from ourselves, and in turn what we expect from everybody else around us. Whether or not we will live up to each other's expectations is where all the stress comes in. There's an old saying: "I'll do the job well, I'll get it done on time, and I'll do it at a reasonable price... pick 2 of 3." It's stressful to manage and prioritize all these expectations, especially if they are not realistic or too much is being demanded of us. Of course, expectations are placed upon us in other places and situations besides simply the workplace. There are expectations upon a nation's citizens to follow the laws and pay taxes and in return its citizens expect fair representation and the protection of their rights and liberties. There are cultural and societal expectations that make for mutual respect amongst people. There are expectations within the family as we divide responsibilities amongst family members. There is an expectation that spouses will be true to each other. Perhaps, there is an expectation upon grandparents for free baby-sitting and advice as long as they can expect in return to spoil their grandkids. The same is true of aunts and uncles and cousins. As much as there is an expectation to be there for each other, especially during important moments of each other's lives, we also expect others to respect our time and space and personal boundaries. What are we to do with all these expectations and all the stress we have to deal with as a result!

It says in the Gospel today that the people were filled with expectation. Certainly, we feel this in many ways in the context of our own lives. Indeed, the season of Advent asks us perform a reality check and look at how we are doing in meeting all the expectations that are placed upon us. And the reality is that for many of us, we are not meeting expectations in all the ways that we would like, overwhelmed as we are. This is where we are and this is where we should be. In acknowledging the many ways in which we fail to meet expectations, Advent serves as a penitential season, which gives us the chance to repent, to turn around, to make the necessary lifestyle changes so that we are able to meet expectations and manage expectations better. That is what John the Baptist was asking of the people today.

A symbol for this overall attitude of repentance is the color violet that adorns our liturgies during this season. We have violet vestments, and violet candles, and violet banners. The color violet serves as a penitential color for its dark hue acknowledges and signifies the darkness of our sins and the gloomy situations we find ourselves in when we don't live up to expectations. And yet there is one day during this Advent season, in which we wear rose-colored vestments and light the rose candle on our wreath and draw our attention to the rose banners. As Emerson pointed out last year, the color rose is technically a lighter shade of violet where we scale back from examining the darkness we find ourselves in and focus on the coming of the light because if we take ourselves too seriously and get too wrapped up in the darkness, it will swallow us alive. In effect, the Church is asking us to go easy on ourselves, recognize that we all could use a break from the many expectations that are placed upon us, and realize that just as expectations can be stressful – they can also be joyful. And so today we celebrate *Gaudete* Sunday: literally, “Rejoice Sunday.”

With this in mind, let's revisit the Gospel from today once again. John the Baptist just finished instructing several people from different walks of life, and yet they didn't think of these many exhortations as cause for yet more stress in their lives. Instead, they were helped to recognize what things were truly important and prioritize their expectations accordingly. Far from being overwhelmed or stressed out, they realized that the only expectation worth holding onto, the only expectation that wouldn't bring about disappointment, was the expectation of the Lord's coming. Whereas every other expectation will end in frustration, there is nothing or no one else that will bring us the happiness and fulfillment that we seek. Jesus Christ is the light that dispels all the darkness and that light is coming into the world. And so when it says that the people were filled with expectation, it would be better characterized as anticipation, the sort of joyful expectation concerning something exciting about to happen: like when the Buffalo Sabres realized they were getting the first overall draft pick, or the joy of a child looking forward to the exchange gifts on the morning of December 25<sup>th</sup> or a pregnant woman expecting the birth of her child – certainly, these are apt images for this time of the year as we commemorate God's choosing of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be Jesus' mother, as we anticipate God's saving gift to the world, as we ready ourselves to receive the gift of his very self, born on Christmas day. The prophet Zephaniah proclaims: “Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior.” St. Paul exclaims: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!” Let us be filled with the same anticipation our ancestors were filled with when they learned to expect the Lord's coming. *Gaudete* Sunday - rejoice Sunday. Let this news fill us with great joy, for the Lord our God is come to save us and we should expect nothing less.

## Weekend Readings: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/121618.cfm>

### Third Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 9

#### Reading 1 [ZEP 3:14-18A](#)

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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.](#)

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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 2 [PHIL 4:4-7](#)

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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.

**Alleluia [IS 61:1](#) (cited in [Lk 4:18](#))**

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R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel [LK 3:10-18](#)**

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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.