



Advent Reflections for EOHSJ 3rd Sunday of Advent 2023

Reflection by Rev. Tyler Tripp, JCL, KHS

Ever since I was a little boy, I always loved the season of Advent. I loved putting up the Christmas tree and the lights. The anticipation leading up to the celebration of Christmas made the day even more exciting. I was always captivated by the Advent wreath, especially that one pink candle. Why was that one different?

Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation, hence the penitential character. It is one of the two great penitential periods in the liturgical year given by the Church to help us prepare for the most significant events of our faith, here the Birth of Jesus, (the other being Lent). We are reminded of the first coming of Jesus at Christmas, but Advent also points us toward the second coming of Christ at the end of time. The purple color is a reminder of our need for repentance and conversion. In the Gospel reading of this Sunday, John the Baptist informs the priests that he is the one sent to prepare the way of the Lord. And how did he prepare? By preaching repentance.

Gaudete Sunday, as the third Sunday of Advent is known, calls us to rejoice. That is what the word means in Latin...Rejoice! The somber purple is replaced by the lighter and more festive pink. We have passed the half-way point. Christmas is almost here. Our anticipation builds, adding to the excitement as the birth of Jesus approaches. The prophet Isaiah reminds us in the first reading of what is coming, not just the birth of Jesus, but what His birth brings: liberty to captives, freedom to prisoners, vindication by our God. We rejoice because our salvation is close at hand.

Imagine you are in a small French village in June 1944. Your town has been occupied by the forces of a tyrant bent on chaos and destruction. You have lost friends and family members to this war. Things seem bleak. Then, you open up a newspaper and read that the Allies have stormed the beaches of Normandy. They are on their way to liberate you. How would you respond? Christmas is our spiritual D-Day, and bigger than D-Day. In taking on human flesh, by being born in Bethlehem, God broke into occupied territory, sneaking behind enemy lines, to do battle against the Enemy. He came to liberate us, not from the oppression of a political military power, but from the powers of Sin and Death.

As a child, I looked forward to the fun of Christmas morning: unwrapping gifts, sharing a meal with my family, and the other festivities of the day, but we know that Christmas is about so much more than the gifts we unwrap; it is about the greatest gift we receive: God's gift of Himself to us. As we move closer to Christmas, may we not lose sight of what this celebration is all about. May we continue to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus, that we might receive Him with great joy.

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