

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Third Sunday of Advent

**Forbearance is making allowance for each other's shortfalls,
and imperfections**

Zephaniah 3:14-18

The prophet Zephaniah calls his people to rejoice because, "The Lord is in our midst". "Shout for joy! Sing! Be glad! Fear not!".....Be happy! Because "The Lord is near"! Our belief in the nearness of our God should remove all fears and anxieties while bringing true and abiding peace.

The book of Zephaniah is brief but contains doom and dire warnings while mourning the depravity of his people. The text referenced above is a call to rejoice, a departure from the mourning and the warning found in the rest of the book. Several of Judah's kings had become unfaithful and immoral and abusive of their people. The faithful voice of Zephaniah mourned the depravity of his people, condemned their pride, their rebelliousness, and their lack of trust in God.

Zephaniah warned that the Day of the Lord was coming, a day when all nations, including Judah, would receive just retribution for all their sins. When that day dawned, the prophet warned, God would "remove the proud boasters from your midst ...I will leave a humble and lowly people....they will do no wrong and tell no lies.....they will rest with no one to disturb them" (3:11-13). It was these, the humble, lowly (the anawim), the remnant of Israel, whom the prophet invited to rejoice.

God himself would rejoice and "sing joyfully as one sings at festivals", says the Prophet. Let us rejoice with our God during this season of Advent because "God is in our midst".

Isaiah 12:2-6

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.
Give thanks to the Lord, acclaim his name.....

Philippians 4:4-7

Paul encouraged the Philippian converts, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" and again, "Rejoice!" Because "The Lord is near"! Our belief in the nearness of our God should remove all fears and anxieties and bring us true and abiding peace.

Paul was in prison and the Philippian converts were about to experience the pain of persecution. Paul exhorted them to rejoice and he exhorts us today to nurture authentic joy amid the fears and anxieties of war and violence, terrorist threats and attacks, poor leadership, clergy scandal, etc. Paul's reason for joy is "The Lord is near".

Faith in the nearness of God should not only make us rejoice but should enable us to cope with anxiety.

Paul encouraged his readers and us today not to waste time fretting or worrying. Instead, channel all energies into prayer, with gratitude.

Paul says that those who call upon God in grateful prayer, will be empowered to endure anxiety..... they will know God's peace, which surpasses all understanding.

Luke 3:10-18

John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of the Lord and called his listeners to repent and prepare the way for the Lord. So they asked him, "What should we do?" They wanted instructions about what it meant to repent and prepare the way. John asked them to be faithful to who and what they were, to be faithful to their responsibilities. Do not abuse your privileges, do not abuse those you serve, give yourself in service.....

Be good and be faithful. Do your duties well. The tax collectors, crowds and soldiers, gathered with John near the Jordan heard a powerful, life-altering message. Today, we hear the same life-altering message, and it is up to us to respond with courage, strength and wisdom.

Saint of the Day, December 15 - Saint Mary (Paula) Di Rosa and 10 other saints are remembered this day.

Paola Francesca Di Rosa was born on November 6, 1813 in Brescia, Italy as one of nine children born to the rich industrialist Clemente Di Rosa and Countess Camilla Albani. She was educated by the Visitation Sisters in their convent in Brescia, but left school after her mother died in 1824. She began working in her father's large spinning mill in Acquafredda where she took notice of the working conditions. She became the manager when she turned nineteen and began caring for the female workers and devoted herself to looking after their material and spiritual needs which was something that her father encouraged her to do.

Her father began searching for suitors to have her married, but she turned each of them down. Mary Di Rosa was upset that her father did this and confessed her disappointment to the priest Faustino Pinzoni who then spoke to her father about his daughter's vocation to serve the Lord. Mary Di Rosa lived at home for the next decade increasing her involvement in various forms of social work.

Brescia suffered from a cholera epidemic in 1836 and Mary Di Rosa went to tend to the ill in the local hospital. It was also around this stage that she directed a home for mute and deaf women and in 1840 began gathering a small group of women that would later evolve into her future religious congregation. Her order became known as the Ancelle della carità and she later took her religious name, Mary Di Rosa and was vested in the habit after undergoing her formation and making her profession in 1852. Mary Di Rosa directed her order to caring for the poor as well the sick since those were the main focus of her religious apostolate. She died at a hospital in Brescia on December 15, 1855 after suffering from a prolonged illness.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs