

The Art of “Rejoicing” even in the 30 minute check-out line. Today, the third Sunday of Advent has always been called “Gaudete Sunday.” The Latin word “gaudete” means ‘to give joy’ or ‘rejoice.’ The second reading at Mass from St. Paul begins with this instruction. It is an instruction given by St. Paul because not to have a sense of joy in our dealings with others, even when it is difficult, is to not use the gift of God’s grace to overcome the gloominess that tries to overtake us. But it is hard to ‘give joy’ when time presses heavily upon us and the preparation days till Christmas pass by all too quickly.

Obviously St. Paul never had to brave the shopping malls, department stores and the complexities of Internet shopping. St. Paul did have to brave unforgiving seas that left him ship-wrecked and stranded twice and he did have to brave the civil courts of his time where he was beaten in the presence of the Judge. St. Paul endured greater hardships than waiting in line at the cash register for thirty minutes.

Next time we feel our patience slipping and our nerves unraveling, think of St. Paul who rejoiced in the midst of difficulty and frustration. Think of the Lord he followed who endured a less than dignified birth and a shameful death. Paul rejoiced and urged his fellow Christians to do the same because Jesus lived a life of ‘giving joy’ (rejoicing). Jesus did this though he often had nowhere to lay his head and did without many of the comforts of the modern world.

You and I, as well as the children we guide, would do well during this season of stress to lay our stress at the feet of Jesus rather than at the doorstep of a brother or sister, mother or father, friend or stranger. Jesus, who calms every anxiety, can deal with our stress. After all, he has helped billions throughout the ages to REJOICE in the middle of pain, fear and even in delayed check-out lines.

Rejoice in Mercy. On Wednesday, December 20, in the midst of the last minute preparations for the big weekend coming up, take advantage of the greatest gift you can give yourself, Jesus’ mercy. A veritable shopping mall of confessors will be there for you. 12 priests will be present to enable your experience of Jesus’ life saving mercy.

Enter Christmas with a manger fully prepared, your heart ready to bring forth the Savior as you rejoice at his first coming forth from blessed Mary.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. Every six to seven years we have this phenomena of the last Sunday of Advent also being the day before Christmas. This coming Sunday is just that. Christmas eve does not begin until evening so the morning is Advent Week IV. Attending Mass on Sunday morning (or the vigil on Saturday) is the expectation. Yes, there are no 2 for the price of 1 offers. It only happens every six to seven years. Besides if I am really excited about celebrating His birth, I should be contented with receiving our Lord in Holy Communion twice in this short span of time.