

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Zephaniah 3:14-18      Philippians 4:4-7    Luke 3:10-18*

### HOMILY

Let us once again focus on our Advent Wreath, particularly on the candles.

The first place in the world where Advent was celebrated was in Gaul in about the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century and then Spain. Christians in these parts of the world celebrated Advent as a time of penitence and change in preparation of the feast of Christmas. Advent time was dominated by a pre-Christmas fast with constant calls for repentance. Grim moods and purple colours were central in this period.

But not everyone in the world celebrated advent in that serious and penitential way. Later on, when the Church in Rome took on the observance of Advent, it was specifically a festive and joyful time of preparation for the feast of Christmas. The Roman church did not see the need for the prolonged pre-Christmas fast. There was no room for grim colours and moods.

For centuries the two ways of celebrating Advent co-existed along each other and the church kept asking herself how it should celebrate Advent. Finally, the church, combined both traditions. The original Gaul Tradition of Penitence and the Roman festive Tradition of joy into the one observance of Advent. That's why we have lit the rose candle on our Advent wreath today. It represents the joyful flavour of the Roman tradition of celebrating Advent. Thus, in the midst of a serious, strongly penitential character of Advent we plant the Gaudete element of Joy on this Third Sunday of Advent.

But if we look to the central character of today's Gospel, John the Baptist, we may convince ourselves that there is everything to him except joy and conclude that he fits more in the Gaul Tradition than in the Roman Tradition. From the Gospel of today, Yes it is true, that John the Baptist had a serious message to preach to all those who came asking him '*What must we do?*' He had a serious message to Tax collectors and all soldiers.

But there is another side to him. Isn't it John the Baptist who leapt for joy in his mother's womb when Mary visited Elizabeth? Isn't it him who yelled out '*Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*' pointing out to Jesus? He surely must have said this with a lot of joy. This is just to show us that we need both, penitence and joy this advent time. We need both the Gaul Tradition as well as the Roman Tradition this Advent time. We need the purple as well as the rose in Advent.

Therefore, the one question we need to ask ourselves today is, '*how are we implementing these two equally important aspects of advent time?*'