

12/17/17 3 Advent A

-- The traditional term we use for this Sunday is *Gaudete* Sunday. The word *Gaudete* means “rejoice.” It echoes Paul’s closing thought to the people he wrote to in our 2nd reading. It’s also why this is one of two Sundays that we are allowed to wear rose vestments.

-- This year, it happens to come as close as it can to Christmas, only eight days before. Many of us look forward to that day, but not all. For some, the holiday is tough.

-- I think of visiting my doctor earlier this week to get my stitches out. He lost his young adult son to suicide this past year. That’s got to be tough. And he admitted it was, yet he isn’t in a total funk. He has hope.

-- Hope is a principle theme of the Advent season. Any of you who’ve been following the Dynamic Catholic videos for Advent know that they are focusing upon the theme of hope. And so does God’s word.

-- Hope is an often-misunderstood virtue. You shouldn’t confuse it with mere optimism. Hope doesn’t mean we just let things go trusting that everything is going to work out no matter what we or others do.

-- The people of Israel who returned from exile quickly learned that they could not just pick up where they left off 70 years ago. They had to rebuild their homes, their city, and eventually the temple of God.

-- It didn’t happen overnight; it took decades. But the prophets knew that, through perseverance and God’s blessings, the people would rebuild and a semblance of justice would be established in the land.

-- St. Paul knew that Jesus Christ had already done the hard work of enabling God’s saving work. He’d experienced it personally. He wanted to encourage those early Christians not to give up because the justice of a perfect world had not yet been fulfilled. It would come in time.

-- John the Baptist was willing to wait for the Messiah and God’s saving work. Sort of like MLK, he looked forward to it even though he suspected he would not live to see it play out. And he was OK with that.

-- A person with true hope looks to the future while working in the present to bring comfort to the sorrowful and justice to the needy in practical ways.

-- The Dynamic Catholic Advent series has suggested some ways to foster hope. One of them is personal: write down those things in your present life which drain hope from you, and those that feed hope. Resolve to focus on the latter.

-- Another lesson is that God works through us to bring hope to others. One practical thing we can do is write a letter or note of encouragement to someone you know who is struggling.

-- In all this, as the Dynamic Catholic team reminds us, we can't think that it all depends upon us. Most of us, at one time or another in life, will face a crisis we cannot deal with on our own without some human help.

-- That is when we have to trust that we can turn to others—whether in our family, among our friends, or in the Church—to help us. We should not be afraid to do so. And we should not hesitate to aid those who seek help from us.

-- This weekend, many of our parishioners (with the leadership of our KofC) are supporting hundreds of families in our area in our Christmas for Kids effort. We need to sustain some of these efforts throughout the year.

-- “Rejoice always.” So St. Paul says today. We can rejoice, not because everything is well in the world, but because God is still Lord and Jesus has come to free us of sin. One day he will establish perfect justice and peace in the world.

-- Meanwhile, we pray for the grace of true hope, and we continue to plant the seeds of hope in our world.