

## ***Rejoice Always Pray without Ceasing***

On this third Sunday of Advent the Church is filled with joyful hope because her Lord is near. St. Paul expresses the mood of the Church when he writes in today's second reading, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing."

***Rejoice Always:*** We Christians can always rejoice because the source of our joy is the Spirit of God that lives in us. This Holy Spirit fills us with God's own life, which enables us to rejoice in the most trying of circumstances. As one spiritual writer puts it, "Joy is the echo of God's life in our heart." A Christian who is always morose and discouraged has missed the central mystery of our faith. A Christian who is always pessimistic and negative has missed the central mystery of our faith. Christians always rejoice because they know that God has saved them in Christ. Christians always rejoice because they know that they are destined for resurrection life. Christians always rejoice because they know that the victory belongs to God.

But how can I rejoice when I am sick and infirm? How can I rejoice when my marriage is falling apart? How can I rejoice when the world about me seems to be overcome by the power of sin and evil? You can rejoice *in the Lord*; that is, you can rejoice in the assurance that good will triumph over evil. You can rejoice in the knowledge that God will have the last word, the final word, the only word that counts.

***Pray without Ceasing:*** Christians do not limit their prayers to morning and evening prayer. They do not pray on Sunday alone. Those who are in Christ always pray no matter what they are doing, if they do all for Christ. Those who are filled with God's Spirit are always praying because the Spirit of God is always praying within them. To pray always is to be conscious of the presence of God to our lives in all places and at all time. To pray always is to live with the confidence that God is always present to us, even when we are not present to God.

This third Sunday of Advent ought to fill us with hope and joy as we await the coming of Christ into our lives in the Mystery of Christmas. This third Sunday of Advent should remind us that praying and rejoicing are the hallmarks of the Christian life. For if we are in Christ and the Spirit of God is present to us, we can always rejoice, even in the midst of adversity. And if we are in Christ and the Spirit of God is present to us, we are always praying in all that we do and say. So, rejoice always, pray without ceasing.

Finally, use these days of Advent to prepare yourselves for the coming of the Savior. Pray in quiet joy. Read the stories of Christ's birth at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew and at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. Be reconciled to God and to each other. Take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The schedule for Confessions is as follows.

**Confessions**

**Saturdays 3:00 to 4:00 PM**

**Next Monday, Dec 22, 6:00 to 8:00 PM**

*Father Matera*