

Zeph. 3:14-17;  
Is. 12:2-6;  
Phil. 4:4-7;  
Lk. 3:10-18

# THE GOOD NEWS

*Gaudete! “Rejoice!”*

Above all, this is what Advent is. The themes of its first two Sundays (the announcement of the coming judgment and John’s invitation to undergo conversion) are meaningful only in the light of the joy that explodes from the lines of the readings of this third Sunday.

Advent consists of rejoicing at the good news foretold centuries ago by the prophets, who quivered with joy at the mere thought that the Messiah would one day defeat the enemy and restore Israel to its primordial vocation: to be a kingdom of love. Salvation has arrived; the yearning of every heart has been fulfilled: we are finally free to love. We have been liberated from the condemnation inflicted on us by our enemy, Satan—that of withdrawing into ourselves, into our small personal interests. We are now able to let go of anxiety because if God is with us, if Jesus has arrived in our midst, then who can stand against us? “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things...” according to Paul. Nothing frightens us any longer because, with the coming of Jesus, death is defeated and the sting of sin along with it. It has no more power over us as we have been freed from its dominion and brought to a life of freedom, hope and joy. Is it not sadly true that, often unaware of what we are doing, we run the risk of living by the adage: *mors tua vita mea* (your death means my life)? But the Gospel of joy, the *Evangelii gaudium*, is something entirely different! It means *your Life is my life!*

“So then, what should we do?” the people ask John, who replies: “Do not mistreat others or practice extortion; be satisfied with your wages....” During the Ecclesial Congress held in Florence, Italy this past November, Pope Francis interpreted this Gospel passage in terms of humility selflessness, blessing. Blessing! Yes, we are blessed, we are joyful, when we finally accept the reality that we have been freed from our self-centeredness and are thus able to enter with renewed hearts into that baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire in which we were immersed long ago.

## Prayer

Lord, I am often unhappy;  
nothing gives me joy.  
I see only desolation, selfishness,  
war and struggle around me.  
My Lord and Master,  
I am waiting for the salvation  
that comes from you alone.  
I am waiting for the liberation  
that only you can bring about.  
Yes, freedom is at hand!  
Amen.

*Stefano Stimamiglio, ssp*

