

## Homily, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent – Year C 16<sup>th</sup> December 2018

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The Third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete, rejoice in Latin, being the first word of the traditional entrance hymn for the Mass of the Third Sunday of Advent. The entrance hymn boldly proclaims:

*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your forbearance be known to all, for the Lord is near at hand; have no anxiety about anything, but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God. Lord, you have blessed your land; you have turned away the captivity of Jacob”*

As I reflect on the words ‘have no anxiety about anything’ I realise I live in a society awash with anxiety; anxiety about house prices; anxiety about refugees; anxiety about our security; anxiety about anxiety and anxiety about Christmas. What is the cure for this anxiety? What will bring me hope and joy? Well if I believe the latest Christmas catalogue that’s arrived in my letter box joy is only found in acquisition, owning things. I live in a society that has lost its sense of joy and can only find hope in a future it dreams and creates for

itself. A future founded on the idea that joy can only be found in the material pleasures of life, a future that never meets our expectations. My Grandfather used to say the only thing you can say for sure about a new road is it will eventually create a traffic jam. Yet as I drive into Blaxland I see an advertising poster in the window of our local bottle shop; “Hope available here”. The advertisement is for the Hope Brewing Company. However, the idea that hope is for sale or can be found in a bottle shop intrigues me. The idea that hope and the joy it anticipates, is a commodity that can be bought, just like one would buy a new refrigerator, beautifully captures the rational of the secular society I live in.

If you're depressed, without hope then you simply have not got enough money. Otherwise you would simply go out and buy some hope, so the reason for your depression is you're lazy otherwise you would work hard and have plenty of money to buy hope. The reason you are depressed is your laziness. It's totally your fault that you are without hope, it's your problem not mine. You might be sitting there thinking Deacon George has finally cracked, this is totally ridiculous: You can't buy hope!

Well look around you. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ this Christmas we are barraged with advertising to consume, to buy. Argh; but I say to myself Christmas is all about giving. But even 'giving' has been hijacked by the advertising companies. The ads at Christmas tell me that the joy of giving comes from the happiness on the face of my partner, kids etc. when they receive the latest; most expensive; most popular 'thing'. It is difficult not to escape this advertising as it targets everybody; it builds my expectation that joy can only be found in giving and receiving the latest most expensive; most popular 'thing'. Don't get me wrong I enjoy the festivities of Christmas I enjoy the celebration. I set aside a selection of wines which I have cellared for some years my Christmas Wines. I buy gifts.

But the celebration of Christmas points to a joy beyond the gifts, the food and wine. Christmas points to the joy to be found in our own salvation. A salvation founded in humility. Our God the creator of the Universe chose to send Christ His Son to be born in a stable amongst the animals because there was no room for Him. Christ was born in the lowliest of circumstances yet He brought to an undeserving humanity the gift of eternal life. The hope and joy of Christ is not founded in material wealth

but in the love of the Father. The joy offered by Christ can only be found in love. That is why in today's Gospel when the people ask John how they should prepare for the coming of Christ, the Messiah. John encourages them to love one another, to be content with what you have and be merciful to those who have less than you, be tolerant acting always out of love. As St Paul writes in the second reading *"what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone."*

If I could give one gift this Christmas it would be a sense of "enoughness", the sense of having enough. A sense beautifully captured in words "you take what you need and you leave the rest" from The Band's song The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down. Why enoughness? Well I believe that the greatest threat to humanity this Advent is not Climate Change or nuclear weapons but uncontrolled greed. Uncontrolled greed is at the source of our anxiety, we don't want to share, and we want more. Why settle for one investment property to secure my retirement when I can have 2 or 3. Then instead of me owning the properties the properties own me. There is a beautiful saying from the Tao: You should be like water, be content to settle in low places, benefit all living things, and be at one with creation.

My prayer this Gaudete Sunday is that we all find that deep Christian joy in celebrating Christ in each and every one of us, His creation. Because: Hope can't be found in a bottle shop. Hope can only be found in Christ and His message; so rejoice in the Lord always; and have no anxiety about anything.