***Third Sunday of Advent***

Negative!  Negative!  Negative!  "The kids are doing this.  The seniors are doing that.  This is what is going on in our world, and it is wrong.  This is why our country is going to hell in a handbag.  And Catholics are joining in, or not doing enough about it."  Negative! Negative! Negative!

-“You really told them, Father. That was a great sermon.  It's about time someone said that about those people.”

-And so people are entertained at Mass as they hear about other people’s failings. The priest’s words are followed with applause.  “Way to stick it to them, Father.”

-This is not what the Church should be about.  The direction of negativity is on a mean road, an unkind road, one of arrogance.  Where is the joy of Jesus Christ in all this negativity?

"There was a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light: he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."

-Who do you think the true light is that the Bible said was coming into the world? We know in our minds that it was Jesus The Light of the World. It is our hearts that need to reflect that Light, as messengers of His Good News.

-Like John the Baptist we are not the Light, but we are called to reflect His Light to our brothers and sisters.

-Take a Mirror for example and I will give someone a flashlight to shine on the mirror. Christ is that Light and we are the ones who mirror it or reflect it out to all who are in need of His Light. We are his messengers and mouthpieces on earth.

-Pope Francis tried to change the tone of the preaching in the Church when he issued the apostolic exhortation *The Gospel of Joy*. The Pope’s exhortation took the world by storm.  It committed the Church to reassess its methods and goals.  He called us to communicate the joy of the Gospel to the world.  He told us that the main concern of the Church must be to bring the joy of Jesus Christ to the entire world.

-For too long our Church has been associated with expounding the same moral topics over and over again.  Many Bishops, Priests and Deacons have reduced the vast richness of our faith to our positions on topics such as abortion, climate change, euthanasia, capital punishment and gay marriage.

-As a result, instead of being encouraged to bring the joy of the Gospel to the world, people are confronted, even harangued with these topics, sometimes as often as once a month and sometimes every week.

-How are people to experience and communicate the joy of the Gospel when all they hear from the pulpit are negatives?  Pope Francis was not telling us to back down from Church teaching.  He simply told us to stop pounding our positions into the people.

-This Sunday is Gaudete Sunday, Rejoice Sunday.*“Brothers and sisters,”* St. Paul says in the second reading, *“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”*

-Rejoice, this Sunday tells us.  The Rose vestments remind us that this is a time of great expectations. We have every reason to be full of joy. Rejoice, Christmas is almost here.  *Rejoice, not so much that we have found Christ, but rejoice that He has found us.*

-There are certainly times that each of us feels lost.  There are times that we feel alone.  But we are not lost.  He has found us.  We are not alone.  He is with us.  With Jesus in our lives, the crises we face become challenges, but not devastating events.

-A loved one becomes sick, or even dies.  We become sick and receive the diagnosis that our condition is terminal.  A marriage falls apart.  A job is lost.  A friend is lost to an addiction.  Whatever the crisis, we know that the final result will be union with God.  Jesus is with us always, particularly in the worst of our times.  Rejoice in the Lord.

-Jesus is there.  He has found us.  Now, the whole focus of our lives has changed. With Jesus we can live in His Love.  Rejoice in the Lord.

 “*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.”*

-These words of our first reading from the prophet Isaiah were read by Jesus Himself in the Synagogue of Nazareth in what we can call His first sermon.

-As Christians to the heart of our being, we also proclaim these words.  We are anointed by God.  We are baptized.  And we are sent.  We are sent to bring the Light of His joy to the world.

-We are to bring glad tidings to the poor, news that God knows their plight and will care for them through His people here on earth, the Church.  We are to tell the heart broken that God hears their cries.  If they are mourning the loss of a loved one, they need to hear that the Lord has conquered death and that those who have let Him into their lives will live with Him forever.

-If their hearts are broken by events beyond their control, the loss of a job, the loss of a marriage, or any series of events that make them feel abandoned by the world, alone in society, they need to know that Jesus is the Mender of Broken Hearts.  If they are held captive by others, or perhaps by their own addictions, they need to know that Jesus provides freedom and liberty.  They do not have to spend the rest of their lives as victims of society.  With Jesus the Light of the World, they can be victors, not victims.

-It is up to us to lead people to the victory of Jesus Christ.  We do this by sharing our joy with them.  *“I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul.”*  I was lost, but now I am found.  We were all lost, but He found us.  His Grace is Amazing.

-How can we be anything other than positive? Rejoice in His Light!

-And Let the Joy of His Light reflect through your hearts to all.