

This week we come to the third Sunday of Advent and it is known as Gaudete Sunday. The name comes from the first words of the Entrance Antiphon which begins by reminding us to REJOICE.

Advent is certainly a time to rejoice. Yes, there is a certain penitential aspect that is present during this season. It is a time for us to stop everything that we are doing and to watch! Watch for whom? We are to watch for Jesus who promises to us that He will come again.

As we stop and refocus our lives once again on our beloved God, we may recognize that there are some areas in our lives in which we still need to grow. There may even be a few areas in which we need to take heed of John the Baptist's advice for us to repent. We need to turn away from those things that keep us from being able to meet Christ and recognize Him as He comes to us in our daily lives.

This year our penance service here at St. Francis was a bit earlier than normal and there was not a large turnout from our parish. I would encourage those of you that have not had the opportunity to take advantage of our God's mercy and forgiveness as we prepare to celebrate our Lord's birth to see about possibly attending one of the two final penance services in our vicariate. They are being offered, Tuesday, December 19 at 7:00 pm at Our Lady of the Lake and then on Wednesday, December 20 at 7:00 pm at St. Anthony.

At this time I also want to take a moment to thank everyone that has taken tags from our giving tree that is located in the outer narthex. Two weekends in a row the tree has been stripped bare of its tags. It is amazing to see the outpouring of love and Christmas cheer from all of you, particularly as you have responded so generously to bringing Christ's light and love to those in need. May God bless you for your generosity and compassion.

Advents Blessings and Love,

Fr. James