

Well, here we are celebrating the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudate Sunday. Gaudete - Rejoice. The Victorian Rose candle is lit, the Liturgical color of the day is Victorian Rose or Purple. The color Victorian Rose is used twice in a Liturgical year, Gaudete Sunday and Laetare Sunday. If you have trouble remembering which is which, Laetare Sunday is during Lent, L for L.

Advent is usually a happy season, full shopping, parties, food, music and lights. In the retail world, Christmas begins right after Halloween and then kicks into overdrive on Black Friday. Many people mirror this, barely putting away leftover turkey before decorating for. While the calendar is fine for secular society, it has nothing to do with the child at the heart of the season. He will not be here until Christmas eve and all the early bird sales and specials will not speed that up. That's why it's traditional, though not required, that we do not put the Christ Child into the manger until the appropriate time. At this time of year we all have our favorite Christmas movies, It's a Wonderful Life, Home Alone, A Christmas Story, National Lampoons Christmas Vacation, White Christmas, A Christmas Carol. Our favorite songs,

White Christmas, Little Drummer Boy, O Holy Night, O Come O Come Emanuel, Jingle Bell Rock.

So why do we need a reminder on the third Sunday of Advent to rejoice? Why do we need a different colored candle to remind us? Because the fun that comes from friends, parties, shopping, a full belly from eating too much, is not the same thing as Christmas joy. Pope Francis spoke at a mass about the difference between happiness and joy, and he said, “ To be happy is good, yet joy is something more. It’s another thing, something which does not depend on external motivations, or passing issues: it is more profound. It is a gift. To be happy at all moments, at all cost, can at the end turn into superficiality and shallowness. This leaves us without Christian wisdom, which makes us dumb, and naive. All is joy...NO joy is something else; it is a gift from the Lord.” If joy is a gift from the Lord, then the Lord Himself is our first and greatest gift, and the only one that will never tarnish, or break, or fade. Gaudate Sunday reminds us that He has not yet arrived, but He is very near.

So, even though we may be having happy times during Advent, Gaudate Sunday is a moment to stop and reflect on the sources of true joy. And if the advent season has brought

causes for stress and sorrow into our lives, than the lighting of the rose candle is an opportunity to take heart and refocus on what the Mass of Christ is all about.

Advent wreaths are not just a Catholic thing, wreaths are common in the western church, including among Episcopalians, Lutherans and other mainline Christian denominations. Some of the other denominations substitute a blue candle for the rose one. Blue, though, is not a Catholic liturgical color, even though Mary is often portrayed in blue robes.

We read in Philippians; “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Perhaps we'll have the same revelation that came upon the title character of Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas, as he stood atop Mount Crumpit with all the Who's Christmas goodies piled high on a sleigh ready to be dumped. But up from Whoville, divested of all its finery and fine food came

not howls of anguish nor shouts of anger but the sound of sweet singing.

**“ And the Grinch with his Grinch feet ice cold in the snow
Stood puzzling and puzzling, How could it be so?**

It came without ribbons! It came without tags!

It came without packages, boxes or bags!

And he puzzled for three hours, till his puzzler was sore

Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before

Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store.

Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.”

Christ is coming. Prepare ye the way of the Lord.