

Fr Ryan Homily 11/27/22 – 1st Sunday of Advent

Read: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44

So just a question for you as we are now entering the season of Advent, our preparation for Christmas, do you want to be a joyful person? Like starting today? Just hold on to that one question maybe through this Advent season, do you wanna be a joyful person? And I ask that question because I just had a number of conversations over these past weeks or months with different people where I've noticed the same sort of theme or trend comes up of people thinking like yeah I know God ultimately wants me to be happy with Him, joyful one day with Him in Heaven. I get that God wants me to have joy later on. I get that He wants my good, he wants me to go to Heaven and everything, but I just don't know if I'm convinced He wants me to be happy right now in this life. So many people and I think that's a common thing that we find in the hearts of God's people and maybe that's something in your heart as well. So that question again as we're beginning Advent do you wanna be a joyful person starting today? Cause we're starting now to get ready for Christmas with our season of Advent and we know that at Christmas one of the songs everyone knows is Joy to the World. We don't sing about joy one day in Heaven, joy someday later on. No the announcement when Jesus was born was joy to the world starting that moment because Jesus has arrived and from every moment of time there on. And I don't know if you know this but the season of Advent, the description that the church actually gives us is, Advent is a season of devout and joyful preparation for the coming of Christ, for the coming of Jesus. I'll say that again, Advent is a season of devout and joyful preparation for the coming of Christ. And that's both comings of Christ. So in the gospel Jesus' words are about His second coming when He comes at the end of time or the end of our lives, so it's also joyful preparation for that. Not a scared preparation, a joyful one. Joyful, just having joy in your heart. And I'm sure I've spoken about this in previous Advents but it's always at least a good reminder for myself that joy is a choice. It's not just a feeling, you have to make a decision to be joyful in your life cause there have been plenty of times where I've chosen not to have joy. Somebody can ask me how was your week or how was your vacation and maybe it went really well but I choose to focus on the one or two things that annoyed me or didn't go as planned or I had to wait for something, and I focus on that and I choose not to have joy. So having joy is a choice and I don't know if you

know this, but joy is actually a uniquely Christian thing. It's unique to us. If you know G K Chesterton, he was an atheist converted to Catholicism at the beginning part of the last century, Chesterton said this that joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian. Joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian. But you know I don't know if that's what were always known for in the church. Like if you had to pick one word to describe Catholics, how many would choose the word joyful? How often do we act that way? Or when was the last time you heard somebody say oh my goodness they're so joyful they must be Catholic? And yet Chesterton said that joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian. It was introduced to the world by Christianity when Jesus was born. In fact the first reading, Isaiah Chapter 2, in Isaiah God prophesied this. He said one day, one day all nations ALL NATIONS will be streaming to the Lord's house- so not just the Jewish people, one day every nationality, every ethnicity, every country in the world – one day all people will be streaming to the Lord's house. Then we recite it again and again in the song. How will we go to the Lord's house? Rejoicing I will go to the Lord's house. So joy, it's not an option for us as Christians, we are actually commanded in scripture to have joy, to rejoice in our lives. Now what is joy? I guess it would be important to define what it actually is if we're commanded to have it and not have a strange, different definition. So joy is this, just this, an abiding sense of wellbeing. An abiding sense of wellbeing. Joy is the abiding and pervasive sense of wellbeing. It's knowing that my life is not up to chance, it's not up to happenstance. My life is not in the hands of fate but the abiding sense that there is a God, and He knows my name. And that's why Pope Benedict said faith has to come up, joy has to come out of faith. Joy rises from our faith. Benedict said when you know there are people in your life that should've loved you, that should've loved you and didn't. And unfortunately we know that happens, whether it be parents sometimes or whoever it might be. People who should've loved you but didn't, that is a cause for sorrow and sadness but then when you realize that God remembers you. To wake up every morning and go I am not forgotten by God. He knows my name; He cares about my wellbeing. That abiding sense of wellbeing that comes out of faith so that no matter what I go through in life, even when my life is touched with pain or it's touched with sorrow, it's touched with uncertainty, I still have this abiding sense of wellbeing. I still have joy. And I don't know if you know this but when we pray the joyful mysteries of the Rosary during Advent, the church asks us to focus on the joyful mysteries. Those are the mysteries that surround the birth of Jesus.

We call them the joyful mysteries and maybe this Advent just a challenge for yourself this year would be to pray the joyful mysteries of the Rosary every day. To make that part of your prayer. Or at least when you pray the Rosary during Advent, pray the joyful mysteries but challenge yourself to do it every day. Because think about them, the joyful mysteries. The first joyful mystery was the annunciation. The angel Gabriel comes to Mary, tells her that God wants her to be the mother of His son. Second joyful mystery Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, John leaps for joy in her womb. Third is the birth of Jesus. Then it's the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Finally the finding of Jesus in the temple when He's 12 years old. Now I don't know if you've thought about this but every single one of those joyful mysteries are touched by pain and by sadness and by uncertainty. The five joyful mysteries, not the sorrowful ones. So when Gabriel appears to Mary and says you're gonna be the mother of God's son, at first Mary is like how? Angel tells her how. Mary says okay and then the angel disappears. Complete uncertainty at that moment about what comes next for her. And we know that right after the angel leaves, no one believes her. Joseph at first either doesn't believe her and wants to divorce her quietly or he does believe her but he doesn't think he's worthy to be the foster father of the savior, so he wants to divorce her quietly. Either way that moment is touched by uncertainty and sadness. Second joyful mystery, maybe the most joyful, Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth on like a five-day journey for a newly pregnant lady without her family, alone. Not knowing what's gonna happen next in her life, touched by uncertainty. Third joyful mystery the Nativity. You know we always think it's oh holy night, silent night and yet we realize Jesus was born in absolute destitution. He didn't have a home. His mom and dad don't have enough money to pay for a place to stay. And immediately after Jesus is born, the king is trying to kill Him and so his family has to flee to another country, Egypt. Talk about incredible pain, loss, uncertainty touching this joyful mystery. Then the presentation, it's awesome! Eight days after Jesus is born Mary and Joseph bring Him to the temple to be circumcised and Simion sees Jesus and he says this is awesome. Now Lord you can let your servant go in peace, my eyes have seen your promise fulfilled. I've seen the savior – an incredible day. But then the next words out of his mouth, Simion looks at Mary and says and you a sort of sorrow is gonna pierce your heart because even at that moment he can see all of this is gonna lead to the crucifixion. Sorrow touches every single one of the joyful mysteries. Including the

last one when Jesus is found in the temple. Like yes He's found and that's great, but it was after three days of being lost. Can you imagine? Like not just imagine misplacing the Son of God but imagine you being a parent and the uncertainty, the pain of being a mom or dad and having no idea where your child is. Moms and dads you panic after five seconds, this was three days. Every single one of the joyful mysteries is touched by pain, by sadness, and by uncertainty. But that pain and sadness and uncertainty could not conquer the joy, why? Because joy is that abiding sense of wellbeing. Every single one of those joyful mysteries had pain and sorrow and uncertainty but they're still joyful why? Because Jesus was there in the middle of it and God's hand was on all of these events. And the pain and sorrow and uncertainty could not conquer Him. It could not conquer the presence of Jesus. And every person in those mysteries, whether it was Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Simion, had set their hearts on Jesus. And so it has to be in our lives. Because see joy can be a feeling, we can have a feeling of joy, but joy can also be a choice. That abiding and pervasive sense of wellbeing. Having joy means I've set the desire of my heart on the one thing that can never be taken away. Joy can be a choice and I don't know about you but I wanna choose joy this Advent. A so just a question, what is your heart's desire? What have you set your heart on? Is it work? Is it things? Is it just something in this world that can be taken away from you? Well then your happiness can always be taken away. This Advent is my heart's desire rest? Like is my heart's desire I just wanna be done? Is my heart's desire I want comfort? Like a thousand things compete for our heart and for our attention but if it's Him. If He is your heart's desire then there's absolutely no reason that you and I can not rejoice heartily in the Lord at all times this season of Advent. So this season of Advent I wanna choose joy and I don't know about you but if you want to too it's really simple. This is the last thing – do you want to be a joyful person starting today? It's not complicated. You can actually start it this morning and experience joy. You can start now. All it means is this, like the complicated way of saying it is, setting Jesus as your heart's desire. The simple way of saying it is this morning in your prayer, at some point in your prayer this morning, simply and honestly turn to the Father and simply say these words Father, thy will be done. That's it. Oh that's so simple. It is! Joy is not complicated. Joy is exceedingly simple. It means turning to the Father this morning and just honestly and simply saying Father, thy will be done in my life. Let Jesus become your heart's desire. Do that and experience joy not someday, not one day in

Heaven but now. Not as something fleeting but this abiding sense of wellbeing.
And not just a choice that brings joy into your life, but to realize this choice today,
this choice for joy in saying Father, thy will be done in my life actually brings joy to
the world.

Amen