Advent 3 A

MDP of God

Andy Rooney once said, “For most of life, nothing wonderful happens. If you don't enjoy getting up and working and finishing your work and sitting down to a meal with family or friends, *then the chances are that you're not going to be very happy.*

If someone bases his happiness or unhappiness on major events like a great new job, huge amounts of money, a flawlessly happy marriage or a trip to Paris, *that person isn't going to be happy much of the time*.

If, on the other hand, happiness depends on a good breakfast, flowers in the yard, a drink or a nap, then we are more likely to live with quite a bit of happiness.”

Abraham Lincoln said, “ Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

My dear friends—on this 3rd Sunday of Advent the theme is joy

Now joy is a little different than happiness—happiness is more superficial—but a huge aspect of our Catholic Faith is joy

A sure sign of the Holy Spirit is joy

Our first reading today from the Prophet Isaiah said, “Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return…..**they will meet with joy and gladness**, *sorrow and mourning will flee.*

**In keeping with that sentiment St Teresa of Avila said, "Lord, save me from gloomy saints."**

Many of us have seen people who walk around like this: {Fold hands-head down –gloomy face}[people who act holy but who are sour pusses]

But the fact is—people who are gloomy have not allowed God’s Word to really touch and transform their lives

Because no matter what we face in life- no matter what struggles come our way- no matter what heartaches we have to endure---*we know the times of struggles are very limited and we have an eternity of joy facing us*

And we have that promise because we are loved by the all-powerful God –the God who said the Word {expand arms….}and all of creation came about

The God who loves you and me so much that He humbled Himself to be born of Mary—He eventually embraced the cross, suffered and died—and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven *to prepare a place for us*

We know in the end—for those who are faithful—the struggles and heartaches of this life are nothing compared to the glory to come

So we can face anything with hope and confidence and joy

This has traditionally been known as Gaudete Sunday---Gaudete means “rejoice”

Some people call it “pretty in pink Sunday”

We are half way through Advent and we are approaching the celebration of Christmas

In recent years in Rome they have also referred to this as Bambellini Sunday –so for about 20 years now children have brought the infant Jesus from their nativity scenes to be blessed

We’re doing that here at St Helen’s for the first time—in a few minutes time I’ll ask you to either come up with the statue of the baby Jesus—or have one of your kids—or all of your kids--to bring up the statue of Jesus from your nativity scene

And as they do—I think it’s important to see the joy of the kids

You know kids have such a joy in life—they excited about the littlest things

Especially this time of the year

But unfortunately as we get older a lot of times we’ve allowed ourselves to focus on the things that have gone wrong in life

The disappointments

The struggles of everyday life

The heartaches that befall us—Don’t get me wrong—there are people who have incredible crosses—incredible heartaches—but St Paul promises us in the bible that *the heartaches of this life are nothing compared to the glory to come-*--when you see the incredible heartache in this life---the glory to come ---**we can’t begin to imagine how great it will be!!!**

And focusing on the heartache and struggles can rob us of joy—can rob us of peace

For followers of Christ—*we should be so focused on the incredible gifts of God* **that we don’t allow the disappointments-the struggles**—the heartaches—*to rob us of our joy*

After all—we know that this life is very limited---most of us won’t get a 100 years here=--*that of course is nothing in light of eternity*

And thanks to Jesus—we have eternity to look forward to

Thanks to Him humbling Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary

And that is our picture in the sanctuary this week –when the angle came and asked Mary to consent to be the Mother of the Savior---and Mary in her love for God said yes---and her yes led to the Savior giving you and me such incredible hope

Thanks to Jesus’ mercy---and Jesus so often emphasized the mercy of God—our picture last week in the sanctuary (which we have on display in the back of the church) –was the picture of the prodigal son and the father welcoming him back

So thanks to the mercy Jesus won for us---we have such incredible hope

And that incredible hope my friends—should lead us to incredible joy

My friends—we will not truly be ready for Christmas—unless we allow the joy of the Lord to fill our hearts and our lives

It’s our joy that will help us to share and spread the faith

It’s our joy that will demonstrate to the world that we believe that Jesus really is the Savior who has opened for us the way to eternal life

I’d now like to invite those who have brought the baby Jesus from your nativity scenses to come forward—or better yet send yur kids forward—so we can bless the figures

Bambinelli Sunday Blessing

God, our Father   
you so loved humankind   
that you sent us your only Son Jesus,   
born of the Virgin Mary,   
to save us and lead us back to you.

We pray that with your Blessing   
these images of Jesus,   
who is about to come among us,   
may be a sign of your presence and   
love in our homes.

Good Father,   
give your Blessing to us too,   
to our parents, to our families and   
to our friends.

Open our hearts,   
so that we may be able to   
receive Jesus in joy,   
always do what he asks   
and see him in all those   
who are in need of our love.

We ask you this in the name of Jesus,   
your beloved Son   
who comes to give the world peace.

He lives and reigns forever and ever.   
Amen.