



Third Sunday of Advent reflection by Connecticut Chaplain

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*"Haul out the holly
Put up the tree before my spirit falls again
Fill up the stocking / may be rushing things but deck the halls again
now*

*For we need a little Christmas right this very minute
Candles in the windows and carols at the spinet
Yes we need a little Christmas right this very minute...
We need a little Christmas now!"*

"We Need A Little Christmas" Mame, Jerry Herman

It's after the Crash of 1929. The once affluent Auntie Mame, has lost everything. She can't even manage to keep a job selling roller skates at a local Department Store. She heads home downtrodden, but decides that hope and joy are the answer to crisis and the experience of deprivation. Though not yet Thanksgiving, she tells her companions to start decorating for Christmas, now, this minute. She anticipates the joy which she knows will one day arrive and reverse all of her misfortune and that of her family. Celebrate now the promise of salvation.

This weekend we celebrate "Gaudete Sunday." The name comes from the entrance antiphon for the Mass, "Gaudete in Domino semper; interim dico Gaudete." "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice." We anticipate the profound joy of Christmas, and the mystery of the incarnation – God's humble choice to share in our exile. God chooses to become one with us that we might become one with God. He chooses the unthinkable, to actually share in our deprivation, that he might redeem it. He redeems (renames) deprivation and calls it humility, a humility which allows for God.

Since March and the beginning of the pandemic, the world has been in exile. We have been humbled. We have been in an exile, much like the people of Israel to whom the prophet Isaiah preaches words of comfort, anticipating the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The

people of Israel had been released from their Babylonian captivity, only to find their temple in ruins – their hopes dashed. They chose to rebuild. They chose to hope in the Lord, and anticipate the fulfillment of his promises. They had been humbled, that they might have greater room for God.

It seems that our liturgical year, and the course of the pandemic have become a mirror of each other. As we anticipate the joy of Christmas, and our spiritual return from exile, so too do we await an end to the exile of the pandemic with the distribution of a vaccine. May our Advent journey, and the exile of the pandemic create in us hearts that have been humbled, rather than deprived. May these humbled hearts see the presence of God more clearly in those who, everyday, experience the exile of poverty, illness, lack of adequate healthcare and the despair which comes from uncertainty. We have walked briefly in their shoes. Let us remember our exile.

Rejoice in the Lord, Salvation is near.

