**Homily for the 3rd Sunday of Advent***Rev. Francis D. Kim*

 Actually, Christmas is just like any important happening in life. It takes a lot of hard work; Christmas shopping, sending cards, decorating house, baking cookies, and planning a trip and Christmas parties. All big events take considerable preparation. The bigger the event, the more the preparation.

 One major theme of Advent is hope. We light a third candle, pink, a more cheerful color. It is a symbol of hope and joy. More light but not yet the full light of four candles. We are full of anticipation. We get ready. Jesus is about to be born!

 This third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called, ‘Gaudete’ Sunday from the Latin, which means ‘rejoice’ Sunday. It marks the midpoint of Advent. The sense of joyful anticipation is emphasized. God will be among us soon! We do rejoice. We hear from three joy-filled persons in today’s readings: the prophet Isaiah, St. Paul, and John the Baptist. They joyfully called out, “Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord.”

 We are invited to rejoice in God. What an amazing image to think that we have God who loves us so deeply that He embraces us in the very salvation we need. So, today’s readings talk about the moments of great joy. The coming of Christ offers true joy and happiness. We know, with God, with our Savior, our life is better.

 The prophet Isaiah exhorts the people to shout and sing joyfully, saying, “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul. … The Lord God will make justice and peace spring up before all the nations.”

 Then, our responsorial Psalm also invites us to join in the song of joy and exultation, “My soul rejoices in my God,” indeed, for God is already in our midst.

 St. Paul in the second reading tells us to rejoice always! Each and everyone of us has been called to be God’s chosen people. And, God is always among His people. It is God’s eternal promise. So, we can rejoice always.

 In the Gospel, John the Baptist cries out with great anticipation, “I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.” His message of ‘Good News’ inspired many to believe that God was about to do an extraordinary things in their midst.

 The joy and happiness of the prophet Isaiah, St. Paul, and John the Baptist ran so deep; no matter how they lived, no matter how difficult their lives became, they were full of joy.

 How can we come to this same joy and happiness?

 Mother Teresa says, “Joy is being with God in Christ, loving as Christ loves, helping as He helps, giving as He gives.” That is how we find joy. When we close to God, we rejoice always.

 This week, let us ask in our hearts, “Am I ready to commemorate Christmas with a true happiness and joy?”

 It is a “Rejoice Sunday.” God is always in our midst. Whatever the limitations of our life, we will be able to experience the joy of His presence. What a wonderful news! God is always with us in our lives. So, rejoice and be happy. Don’t worry!

 Use the remaining days of Advent to let the Messiah change our world, our life, and our soul. Embrace the Gospel and live in His truth. Then, you will know that the Savior has indeed come to you!