

## HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - Luke

1. One of the most common phrases in the bible is Fear not
  - a. After Zephaniah says to Israel: shout for joy, sing joyfully, he goes on to say
    - i. Fear not, do not be discouraged, for the Lord is in your midst as a savior
  - b. Paul says to the Philippians: rejoice, have no anxiety at all for the Lord is near
  - c. When the archangel Gabriel comes to Mary to announce that God has chosen her to be the mother of the Savior
    - i. Immediately after greeting her, he says do not be afraid
  - d. In the Resurrection appearances Jesus says to the Apostles, do not be afraid
2. Fear is one of the strongest emotions
  - a. Through evolution we have been conditioned to react quickly to fear
    - i. The adrenaline from fear has an immediate reaction, either fight or flight
    - ii. When our ancestors faced a tiger or a wolf, they did not have time to plan a strategy
      1. Either they grabbed a spear or they ran to the nearest tree
      2. Those who took time to think would not survive
    - iii. Our brains have developed so that when we are afraid, we do not react logically
      1. We look for the quickest way to safety
    - iv. Only when we feel secure do we have the time to consider the situation
      1. Is this really the safest place to be, is there a way I can protect myself long term
  - b. Because fear bypasses ordinary reasoning, it is very effective in manipulating people
  - c. Political campaigns use negative ads to induce fear
    - i. Saying, no matter how you feel about me, watch out for that other guy
    - ii. He or his plans are very scary
3. Reasons for fear and anxiety seem to be always present in our lives
  - a. Fear of trying new things, public speaking is frightening to many
  - b. Fear of failure, excited at first about trying a new skill but discover it is more difficult than realize
  - c. Fear of loss: lose a loved one, lose our livelihood, fear of illness
  - d. Can be a general anxiety, something is wrong with the world around us
    - i. We are not sure what is the cause and does anybody care enough to do anything about it
4. Fear and anxiety fit perfectly with Satan's plans with creating divisions and mistrust
  - a. We quickly fall into a protective mode, I will protect myself and those I care about
  - b. The rest can fend for themselves
  - c. If we allow it fear will destroy communities and society, eventually even families
  - d. When we are afraid, we can't trust anyone
5. What we need is a Savior, someone who will promise us protection

- a. Tricky part is there are a lot of people who pretend to be saviors
  - b. Scam artists promise get rich quick schemes, money will make us secure
  - c. Demagogues who promise security if we follow them exactly
  - d. False saviors have in common is continuing to promote division and fear of others
  - e. They promise to take care of us at the expense of the rest of God's creation, they thrive on continuing fear
6. Today, however, God calls us to rejoice, to not be afraid
- a. True Savior is near, indeed, He is among us
  - b. Jesus is calling us to live as if we had nothing to lose, to know that God is with us no matter what happens
    - i. An example of nothing to lose: think of being a big potluck meal
    - ii. If somebody takes a cookie from your plate, it doesn't bother you, there are probably a hundred more to choose from
7. That is what John the Baptist is telling people when they ask him what they should do
- a. If two coats and your neighbor has none, share with him; similarly with food
  - b. Tax collectors, do not demand more than you are required to collect
  - c. Soldiers: do not extort or make false accusations, be satisfied with your wages
  - d. Why should they do this: because the mighty one is coming who is going to clean up the mess that the world is in
  - e. He will purify the world and purify us so that we will be a worthy harvest for God
8. Zephaniah, St. Paul, John the Baptist are speaking to you and to me today
- a. "Good News, rejoice the savior is here, there is no need to be afraid"
  - b. We really have nothing to lose, Jesus proved that not even death can destroy us
  - c. God is choosing us to be His children, we belong to Him, why should we fear
9. I know this is easier said than done
- a. Fear and anxiety are nasty habits, the hardest to get rid of
  - b. Hard to believe that we really have nothing to lose because God is with us
  - c. I know I have a long way to go to truly trust God one hundred per cent
  - d. From what the saints say, there will always be a nagging doubt
10. That is why God has given us His Holy Spirit through the Church and the Sacraments
- a. By gathering together to pray and support each other, the Spirit brings Jesus to us
  - b. When we receive absolution, we hear the Spirit tells us we are holy people
  - c. In communion, Jesus enters our very being bringing us to His Father
11. God does everything He can to strengthen us, to reassure us of His love
- a. Ultimately He wants us to no longer be afraid
  - b. Rather He wants us to rejoice because He is near, He is in our midst.