

cAdvent 3 ~ December 13, 2009 ~ A homily preached by The Rev'd Erl G. Purnell at Old St. Andrew's Church, Bloomfield, CT

Zephaniah 3.14-20; Canticle 9; Philippians 4.4-7; Luke 3.7-18

Several things always need to be said on Gaudete Sunday. Yes, it's Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday in Advent and the week when we light the pink candle. What needs to be said, of course, is what's the pink candle is all about and what's Gaudete.

The key here is the Latin: *Gaudete in Domino semper*. Many of you will easily translate that phrase as "You have a big piece of spinach in your front teeth." Actually, that's not true. *In dentibus anticis frustum magnum spinaciae habes* is the spinach one. *Gaudete in Domino semper* means "Always rejoice in the Lord."

But, speaking of spinach, our family code to tell somebody that they have a big piece of spinach in their teeth is to say, ever-so-politely, "Matilda is home." You see, if we spoke in Latin, everyone would immediately want to know what we were talking about.

Be that as it may, *Gaudete in Domino semper* happens to be the opening line in today's New Testament lesson from Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice." And, in the traditional Latin Mass on this 3rd Sunday in Advent, the service begins with *Gaudete in Domino semper*. Hence, the moniker "Gaudete" has been attached to this day.

As for the pink candle, you know that Advent, like Lent, is a penitential season of preparation. Now, we've passed the halfway point in Advent, so there is a relaxation moment, something of a lighter mood, a note of encouragement as we spiritually step even deeper into the darkness. The pink Gaudete candle represents all of that. Aren't you glad you asked?

OK, I'll give you one more Latin phrase. *Si quid posit deese, deerit*. It's Murphy's Law: "If it can go wrong, it will go wrong." Now you can impress your out-of-town family members at Christmas dinner when the mashed potatoes are lumpy.

But, my real interest today is to return to what I was saying last week ... about expectations. Remember, sometimes we have high expectations and other times low ones. Sometimes we have no expectations, like mine about winning the lottery because I never buy tickets. What I challenged you with was something entirely void of expectation, when we actually allow God's grace to act, when we fall fully into the metaphoric arms of the Divine.

This is what faith is. This is trust with its utmost potency. Such defenselessness sings Dame Julian's song that all is well and all will be well and all manner of things shall be well. This is the Buddha's call to be awake. This is the voice of the Hebrew God in Psalm 46, "Be still and know that *I Am*."

"*Gaudete in Domino semper*; again, I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. And, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Powerful words that Paul pens to his friends in Philippi. 'Rest assured,' he says, 'God is immediately present. Don't fret.' And, for someone not known for his lightness of being, in this passage, Paul's spirit is breathy and hopeful, something that must have freshened the Philippians.

Of all the things Paul writes in his epistles, his last sentence touches me most deeply. "And, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

The reason? It's what I was talking about last week. If ... when I really stand in the still of my own being and open the ears of my heart, truly listen, I am always surprised—*semper admiratio*. The Latin *admiratio* actually means "in wonder", wonder that's greater than anything we can possibly expect.

That wonder is the peace of God beyond the memory, reason and skill of the mind. That wonder is the peace that *IS*. *Admiratio* is the *Being* of divinity within and the eternal blessing of Creation—the incarnation of Love in Jesus ... and in you.

There is nothing to expect. Wonder, peace, blessing already *IS*.

Amen.