

## Why “Gaudete Sunday” is Important to Revive Our Sense of Joy

*Pope Benedict XVI explained that joy is still possible in a world with so much suffering.*

The third Sunday of Advent is known as “Gaudete Sunday,” from the Latin word for “rejoice.” It is called this, from the first words of the second reading, because Christmas is near and the Church lifts the penitential atmosphere of Advent to turn our hearts to the joy that is to come. Pope Benedict XVI reflected on this theme during a Sunday Angelus in 2007, and mentioned a frequently asked question in light of the great suffering that still exists in the world. He said, “Some people ask: but is this joy still possible today?” This is a crucial question to answer, as it is difficult to see how we can rejoice when so many of us suffer.

Benedict XVI pointed to the saints for the key to unlock Christian joy.

Men and women of every age and social condition, happy to dedicate their existence to others, give us the answer with their lives! Was not [St.] Mother Teresa of Calcutta an unforgettable witness of true Gospel joy in our time? She lived in touch daily with wretchedness, human degradation and death. Her soul knew the trials of the dark night of faith, yet she gave everyone God’s smile. In one of her writings, we read: “We wait impatiently for paradise, where God is, but it is in our power to be in paradise even here on earth and from this moment. Being happy with God means loving like him, helping like him, giving like him, serving like him” (The Joy of Giving to Others, 1987, p. 143). Yes, joy enters the hearts of those who put themselves at the service of the lowly and poor. God abides in those who love like this and their souls rejoice.

The key to joy is in serving others. This is something we don’t always understand, as we often try to “make” happiness.

If, instead, people make an idol of happiness, they lose their way and it is truly hard for them to find the joy of which Jesus speaks. Unfortunately, this is what is proposed by cultures that replace God by individual happiness, mindsets that find their emblematic effect in seeking pleasure at all costs, in spreading drug use as an escape, a refuge in artificial paradises that later prove to be entirely deceptive.

Above all, we need to remember that lasting joy cannot be found in our own pursuits, but only in God. He alone can give us the joy we seek.

Dear brothers and sisters, one can lose the way even at Christmas, one can exchange the true celebration for one that does not open the heart to Christ’s joy. May the Virgin Mary help all Christians and people in search of God to reach Bethlehem, to encounter the Child who was born for us, for salvation and for the happiness of all humanity.