Homily for the 4th Sunday in Advent 2025 Year A

The readings for the past four weeks of Advent were designed to prepare us for the coming feast of Christmas. They have reminded us, in the words of the great prophets of the Old Testament, of the eternal plans of God's loving heart, to save his people.

They have placed before us the eloquent and urgent pleadings of generation after generation for the coming of the Messiah, God's gift of himself to us in the person of Christ His Son. The dominant moods were those of yearning and judgement. Last Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, the mood subtly changed to one of Joy with an inspiring message of hope and encouragement urging us to rejoice and be happy because the Lord is near.

Now if we are honest, the idea of rejoicing, is not always the obvious hallmark of the Christian. All too often Christians have been associated with sadness, the Gospel message of bearing the Cross of Christ in our lives.

Jesus is seen as the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief; yet we read in St. John's Gospel Christ own words just before He was to ascend to His Father in Heaven, "These things I have spoken to you that my Joy might be in you and your Joy be complete".

Whilst there is certainly pain and suffering in the life of Jesus, there is also a deep Joy which is compatible with pain.

God created us for happiness. We have a God-given infinite capacity for Joy, which in the end only God can fulfil. But we spend our lives searching and striving to attain this Joy; it always eludes us, and we end up often searching for it in all the wrong places. Our big mistake is to equate Joy with pleasure and to look for it in material things.

We can buy pleasure and it can cost us very dearly, but all the money in the world cannot buy happiness, and Christian Joy is something much more, something deeper and richer than the smile and laughter upon a happy face.

Christian Joy comes from an abiding awareness that God is always with us and produces an inner contentment and peace that cannot be taken away from us.

Friendship with God is the source and foundation of this Christian Joy.

No trial can diminish or kill it since it is born of Faith; it is hard to describe, but it always should be evident in the life of a believer.

On that first Christmas, when God came down in the person of Christ, we all told He filled the world with glad tidings of great Joy. That Joy was reflected in the life of Jesus, a life oriented towards the Father in Joy, prayer, and thanksgiving.

Sometimes we so caught up in our daily problems that we fail to reflect the Joy of that marvellous truth, “That God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him might not die, but have eternal life”.

There is no greater proof of love than to give ourselves to others; that is the foundation of true Christian Joy.

Our Christmas Joy cannot be complete unless we show generosity to those who have nothing to give us in return.

We cannot reflect the light and Joy of Christ if in our lives we choose to live by values that do not even remotely resemble the Gospel. Look around you. You know from experience that the happiest people, deeply profoundly happy, are those who are doing the most for others.

In Christ words, “It is in giving that you receive”. Work to import a little Joy into the lives of others and you will see what Joy you receive in return.

God willing that day will come for all of us when we hear those words, “Well done good and faithful servant, enter now into the Joy of the Lord”.