

## **I. Homily – Gaudete Sunday**

**A. The Jewish people throughout their history have suffered great persecution punctuated by salvific moments.**

1. There were the persecutions under pharaoh and so this led God to redeem his people by leading them through the Red Sea and, eventually, into the promised land.
2. There was the destruction of the temple and the exile under the Babylonians. This gave way to the re-dedication of the temple and the restoration.
3. We certainly know in modern day of the holocaust. The list dominates Jewish history, but it is also permeated by the true and sincere faith that Almighty God redeems his people.

**B. For our part, during this season of Advent, when we prepare for the celebration of the coming of the Savior, we have been hearing and will continue to hear readings from the writings of the prophets, e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc.**

1. On the one hand, they remind us of the travails which the chosen people suffered and, on the other hand, they exhort us to Rejoice in the salvation which God has wrought or hope for the salvation which is yet to come.
2. Therefore, we are not surprised when we hear the words of the Prophet Zephaniah:

*a) “Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has removed the judgment against you he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear.”*

*b) In fact, this Sunday has a special name: “Gaudete!” “Rejoice!” It takes its name from the first words of this reading from Zephaniah and the first words of the second reading from St. Paul.*

*c) The violet color we have been wearing during Advent is now lightened just a bit by the white light of Christ peaking through and so we wear the color Rose.*

*d) Our scripture readings invite Jerusalem to rejoice that the Lord has delivered them from evil.*

*e) There are, however, over 300 prophecies describing the coming of the Messiah.*

**C. But, in order to understand the significance of these prophecies, I would like to take one example and look at it a bit deeper. It is the prophecy of Daniel.**

1. The amazing thing is that Daniel's prophecy about the Messiah is quite specific...amazingly specific.<sup>1</sup>

2. The book of the prophet Daniel written during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (167-164) foretold that the Messiah would appear 483 years after the decree to rebuild the temple.

3. So, was Daniel correct about that date? Did the Messiah appear 483 after the decree calling for the rebuilding of the temple?

**D. Before we answer the question about whether Daniel was right about the date the Messiah would come, we need to ask what was happening in the history of the Jewish people at the time that the book of the Prophet Daniel was being written?**

1. Sure enough, you are right, the Jewish people were being persecuted by that ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes. He was persecuting them and he even desecrated the temple, forcing the Jewish people to offer sacrifices to pagan idols on the altar of the temple.

2. However, the Jewish people revolted under the leadership of a priest by the name of Mattathias and his son Judas Maccabeus.

3. Not only was the prophecy of Daniel written during this time, but the Second Book of Maccabees tells the entire story of the faith and heroism of the Jewish people at this time.

*a) It is a story of great faith, strength and self-sacrifice by the Jewish people of the time.*

*b) It is interesting to note that the Book of Maccabees which tells this story is not considered by the Jewish people to be scripture. You can only find it in your Catholic Bible.*

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<sup>1</sup>The Crucified Rabbi: Judaism and the Origins of Catholic Christianity. Taylor Marshall.

**E. In any event, this effort on behalf of the Maccabees was blessed by God and the revolt worked. The Jewish people regained control of the temple.**

**1. Therefore, Judas Maccabeus instituted a new Feast to give thanks to Almighty God for the salvation he had given them and to re-dedicate the temple...again...**

*a) They celebrated the dedication according to the right which Solomon had laid down...but, there was a problem.*

*b) You see...the Jewish people from the moment that the temple had first been built, in fact, even when the Ark of the Covenant was being housed in a tent, the Jewish people knew that the Lord was present in a very special way in that sanctuary and in the temple.*

*c) They referred to this presence as the Glory of the Lord and when the Glory of the Lord led them through the desert to the promised land it took the form of a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire at night.*

*d) Once they came to the temple, they knew that the Glory of the Lord was there in the Holy of Holies.*

*e) But now, with the rededication of the temple by the Maccabees, the glory of the Lord was not in the temple.*

*f) It seemed clear that they must wait until the prophecy of Daniel would be fulfilled.*

**II. So, we have several unanswered questions before us:**

**A. The first question: what was the name of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple by the Maccabees in which the Glory of the Lord did not come to dwell in the temple precincts?**

**1. Of course, the day that the Maccabees rededicated the temple was the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev. For us, this usually occurs in the month of December and the Feast Day of the Rededication of the Temple is called, "Hanukah."**

**2. It is also known as the Festival of Lights, because it commemorates the 8 days of the Feast which the Maccabees had put forward in which the candles in the temple burned miraculously for 8 days with only one day worth of oil.**

**B. What about the date of the prophecy of Daniel? What was the date which Daniel foretold hundreds of years before on which the Messiah would appear and the glory of the Lord would return to the temple?**

1. Well...this is where the New Testament can help a little bit...because St. John wrote in His gospel: "It was the feast of the Dedication [i.e. Hanukkah] at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was walking in the Temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly." (Jn 10:22-24).

a) *And his response was: "The Father and I are one."*

b) *You see. The date that Daniel foretold falls about the year 27 AD which was the year that Christ began his public ministry preaching near the Jordan River and here he is, God walking once again in the temple precincts on the Feast of Hanukah.*

2. The Glory of the Lord had returned to the temple.

**C. Jesus Christ is the light of the world and the Jewish tradition of lighting the Menorah is fulfilled in the presence of the God made man in the manger.**

1. Not only is the Menorah not contrary to our faith, but it is the precursor of that which is fulfilled in Christ. Not only does Christ fill the temple, but he is the temple. This is why there is no more temple in Jerusalem. Why there are no sacrifices offered there. The one sacrifice of Christ is offered on every altar in every Church in the world.

**D. You know my friends, recently there was a little controversy over the Menorah being placed at Santa's house and I admire the Jewish people in this community who had the foresight and fervor to let their faith be known.**

1. I pray daily that God who is love will take hold of every aspect of our lives public and private.

2. This is what the Jewish people in our community have done.

3. Now, how are we going to let the Glory of the Lord which filled Jerusalem and her temple fill our community.

4. Then I remind you of the words of St. Paul: "Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God."

5. And we must truly believe the words uttered by St. John the Baptist: “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

6. Now, let’s listen to the advice of Bishop Sartain on this topic of what we might do...

### **III. Conclusion**