On this day halfway through Advent and exactly halfway between the first and twenty-fifth of December, we rejoice, for the coming of the Lord is near. For this reason, the Church calls this Sunday Gaudete Sunday, *gaudete* meaning rejoice. Besides the proximity of Christmas Day, we realize that the Lord is ever close to those who call on him and those who seek him with a sincere heart. Moreover, we are reminded that the Second Coming is near in the sense that it could happen at any time. Let us rejoice today, comforted in our faith in a God who is always near.

As we gather let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

*Profession of Faith* p.
**I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,** (*bow as we say*) ***and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*** **For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*Introductory Rite:*
*Greeting:*
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

*Penitential Rite:* p.
Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

**I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen**

*Opening Prayer:*
O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
**Amen.**

*Liturgy of the Word:*

*First Reading* p.
A reading from the Book of Isaiah *Isaiah 61: 1-2a, 10-11*

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.

I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

*Responsorial Psalm* *Luke 1: 46-50, 53-54*
R/. My soul rejoices in my God.
**R/. My soul rejoices in my God.**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: **R/.**

The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. **R/.**

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy. **R/.**

*Second Reading*
A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians *1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24*

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

*Gospel* *John 1: 6-8, 19-28*
A reading from the holy Gospel according to John **Glory to you, Lord**

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John.

When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, “Who are you?” He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, “I am not the Christ.” So they asked him, “What are you then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” So they said to him, “Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?”

He said: “I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘make straight the way of the Lord,’* as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie."

This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Reflection on the Word:*

- Isaiah attests that the LORD has sent him "to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God" (Isaiah 61:1–2). How does he claim this responsibility for himself? He says that "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me" (61:1). In baptism and in confirmation we too were anointed. In baptism we were given a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit. In confirmation we were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We already have what the prophet Isaiah had in order to do all those wonderful things in God's name. It is our privilege and responsibility as baptized and confirmed Catholics to do all these things as well.

- When we give of our ourselves and our plenty to those who are poor, we are certainly bringing glad tidings to them. When we bring comfort and the consolation of our faith to the brokenhearted, we help to heal them. When we forgive those held captive by sins or provide a way out for those imprisoned by unjust circumstances, we give them liberty and release. We have been given the grace to help make this coming year a year of favor from the Lord. We just need to pass God's grace on and spread it around.

- Like God's grace, light can spread all around as long as there aren't walls or closed doors blocking its way. John the Baptist testified to the light that is sent by God: the light of the world, who was coming into the world. We have the light of Christ within us now. We are called to open doors and break down walls so that Christ's light can shine on all people, especially those living on the margins of society because of poverty, prejudice, discrimination, fear, or isolation. May we recognize the light of the Lord we have within ourselves as well as that light in others.

**Question of the Week**
How can I shine the light of Christ in my corner of the world?

*Prayer of the Faithful:*
The Lord is near to the poor, the brokenhearted, the hungry, and the lowly—namely, to all those in need. Let us turn to God with our needs and the needs of our sisters and brothers.

- For the Church, that we may bring glad tidings to the poor, healing to the brokenhearted, and liberty to those held captive by circumstances they cannot control, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For the people of Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and the Middle East, the birthplace of the rich faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, that they may live in peace, respecting all peoples' religious traditions and practices, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For those whose voices cry out in the deserts of our own age, where goodness and holiness appear absent, that the world may heed their pleas for repentance and conversion of heart, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- That all people everywhere may put Saint Paul's words into action, retaining what is good and refraining from every kind of evil, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For those suffering from grief, trauma, and loss, that they may know the comforting presence of God through the love and support of others, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For what else should we pray? Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

God of love beyond all telling, you clothe us with the robe of salvation, and wrap us in a mantle of justice. In you is the joy of our souls. May we share that joy with all those we meet. Hear this and all our prayers through your Son, our long-awaited Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Communion Rite*

*The Lord's Prayer:* p.
Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

*Rite of Peace:*
The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

*Communion:*
Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

*Prayer after Communion:*
We implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults and prepare us for the coming feasts.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

*Concluding Rite:*
*Final Blessing:*
May the Lord bless us, ✠ protect us from all evil and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**