

## Grace Notes in Miniature Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup>



Dear Friends:

It seems very fitting this morning as we look towards the Third Sunday in Advent that the sun should be breaking through the clouds I've seen for the past few days. Gaudete Sunday – also called Rose Sunday – takes its name from the opening words of the Entrance Antiphon of the Mass: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzyckxqXoZ4> I can remember singing this as a round as a fairly young child, and even now it brings back campfire prayer time as a Girl Guide. Originally, Advent was a six week season known as St Martin's Lent (following St Martin's Day, December 11<sup>th</sup>) and was a penitential season. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, it was reduced to four weeks and, although it retained penitential characteristics, became more about expectation. As with Laetare Sunday in Lent, Gaudete Sunday's focus is joy. At this time of year, it is a time for the light to break though the darkness, in anticipation of the Light of the World coming into our lives during the darkness of the winter solstice. The name Rose



Sunday reflects the rose-coloured vestments worn by the priest in many parishes on this Sunday (although a former tall, slender pastor used to complain he felt more like a flamingo than a rose!). In his homily on Gaudete Sunday in 2014, Pope Francis urged people to stop fretting about all they had still to do in preparation for Christmas, "think of all the good things life has given you". I think of Pietro Yon's beautiful song, "Gésu Bambino", which refers to Jesus as the Christmas Rose. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NV88hiS2uo> In English: When blossoms flowered 'mid the snows upon a winter night was born the Child, the Christmas Rose, the King of Love and Light. The angels sang, the shepherds sang, the grateful earth rejoiced; and at His blessed birth the stars their exultation voiced.

O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Again the heart with rapture glows to greet the holy night that gave the world its Christmas Rose, its King of Love and Light. Let ev'ry voice acclaim His name, the grateful chorus swell; from paradise to earth He came that we with Him might dwell.

O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

For some other different and beautiful old Christmas carols visit,

<https://aleteia.org/2020/12/10/before-christmas-carols-christians-sang-these-holiday-hymns/>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=3845>



Many people find this time of year very difficult, especially due to the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). The isolation imposed on us by Covid-19 hasn't helped and so we need to find ways to lighten our lives and those of those around us. Marie O'Connell, chaplaincy leader at Holy Trinity, wrote a beautiful reflection which can be found with the monthly reflections written by our chaplains at <https://www.hcdsb.org/Community/Documents/December%20Reflection%202020.pdf> Taking time to lift ourselves by listening to beautiful music such as Handel's Messiah<sup>2</sup>, enjoy a cup of warm cider, read an old favourite

Christmas book or story like Barrington Bunny<sup>3</sup> or O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi"<sup>4</sup>

As I write this, I am listening to Bishop Robert Barron talking to educators at the 2018 Religious Education Congress in Los Angeles on Catholicism and Beauty.<sup>5</sup> If

you can find the hour to listen to this, I hope you will find it uplifting. He talks a lot about how beauty has drawn people to God and to faith. I noticed that several people had posted pictures

on Twitter of the beautiful sunset last night. As I did, you may have learned as a child: "Red sky at night,

shepherd's (sailor's) delight" with the promise of a lovely day on the morrow. Perhaps it is the message of

hope that enables us to stop and drink in the beautiful. We also remember that our Jewish friends lit the first candles on their Hanukkah menorah – or hanukkiah

– last night to celebrate the hope reflected in 1Maccabees 4:36–59 and 2



Maccabees 1:18–36. It may be of interest that although the Books of the Maccabees are not found in the shorter Protestant Bibles, they are in the Catholic Canon of Scripture, inviting us to recognise the joy of Jesus' ancestral faith. If you have the chance

to wish someone a Happy Hanukkah, you can say "Hanukkah Sameach!" ( And I hope you have the opportunity to enjoy some latkes and a game of dreidel!<sup>6</sup>)

With every blessing,

Gillian

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adDyS49S2CM>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.angelfire.com/music/lefantome/bunny.html#:~:text=Barrington%20had%20only%20two%20though%20ts,the%20forest%20are%20my%20family.%22>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/GifMag.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUBNTNiqn60>

<sup>6</sup> <https://toriavey.com/home-garden/arts-crafts/hanukkah-holiday-projects/>