



Third Sunday of Advent (Year C)

Homily

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

**St Gerard Majella Church, Mirrabooka Parish
Sunday 12 December 2021**

As I mentioned at the beginning of the Mass, we've reached a very important moment, as we move steadily towards Christmas, as we celebrate this Third Sunday of Advent, its as if the Church can't wait in order to give thanks for gift of the Son of God, who has come among us as He becomes man and is our Saviour.

And so it is as though there is a rush of blood and we enter into this beautiful moment of great celebration and joy. And that word rejoice is repeated from the Old Testament reading from Zechariah to the Gospel.

And the words, "Do not be afraid," will be found in those readings. So it is with joy that we anticipate the great things at this time of Christmas and the celebrations following them.

Father Daniel has been, for a few years now, assigned to what we call the mission for the people, and that is located in Baldivis. He took up that role about the same time, that Fr Geoff Aldous became Parish Priest of Baldivis and commenced to bring the Catholic community there together.

That community has grown and grown and grown until now this year, they've had the wonderful event of the blessing of the new Church.

Fr Daniel has in a way been part of the journey of the parish of Baldivis, and in his own ways, has contributed greatly to the building up of the people of Baldivis into a parish that is now one of the largest parishes in the Archdiocese, even though the population is still growing, it is territorially one of the biggest that will eventually contain a population of about 60,000 people.

That seems to be the number of people, 60,000 people, in the general population. So that about 20 to 23 per cent of those who will probably be Catholic. And they form a community, and very importantly, a worshipping community in the Church. So this is really a very different reality to what we find here, a smaller population compared to those modern parishes or new parishes.



But yet, what you have here is a community of faith that is very, very strong and we're very grateful for the work of those priests who have gone before Father Daniel, and we're very grateful for all those people, all those generations of people who have been part of this parish and have built it up so willingly and generously.

Father Daniel I'm sure has had the opportunity to already to tell you a little bit about himself and his own journey of faith and his journey to the priesthood. And the things that he has done since being ordained priest. So I don't think I need to repeat those things except to say that he has had a lot of experience in in very different places. And he comes therefore with that experience behind him. And he comes of course with a faith that enables him to be a leader in the community. The faith that he has learnt to put in the people.

And this today is a very important thing. A priest is a leader responsible to the Bishop for the parish that he is given. Be careful.

But today, like many years gone past already, the priest draws together with him, a group of people who he shares a relationship with. And the most significant group among them is the Parish Pastoral Council.

They, with Father Daniel, the day you will be responsible for creating a vision for the parish and think of ways in which that vision can be accomplished. That's the most important thing that a parish council is meant to do.

Sometimes members of parish council are also involved in what we call the operational work of the Parish. Lay people on the ground and the people in the groups and the movements and all those other things within the parish that it applies. But the most important work the parish council does is to be a visionary, strategic group.

And the priest needs to have a group that he seeks advice from, a group that he trusts, a group in which he has faith because of their experience of being part of the church.

At the moment in the Archdiocese, we have a program of formation, two parts that are being completed this year. And two other parts will be completed by the end of next year. This formation is for parish councils. So, I encourage Father Daniel to share his leadership with that group, who will be key leaders in this community.

And I encourage the Pastoral Council to engage in this formation, even though the first two sessions have been completed, they may be repeated, so that the Parish Council of Mirrabooka, which at this stage, have not been a part of.

So I encourage Father Daniel to assist the parish council in its formation. So I'm sure there are many, many things ahead that will be a blessing to this community because of the collaboration



between the priests and the people of the parish.

The Gospel spoke about the distinction between John the Baptist, and Jesus and it brought out a few things that made the Ministry of both different, much like silver and gold.

This I think helps us to understand that each and every one of us has something to offer to this community. Because we don't always have the same things to offer - the same skills and the same experience, but we have something to offer this community because of our faith.

John the Baptist was seen as the one that came before Jesus, and he was the one who came, as this Gospel says, like a man who is separated like the seeds of wheat from the chaff.

If we throw the chaff and the wheat in the wind, the wind will separate the wheat from the chaff.

That way, what John was offering to people was the wind of the Holy Spirit and the fire of the Holy Spirit. The wind of the Holy Spirit separating what is good from what is not needed, what is not necessary.

The fire represents that way in which both the community can be fired up by the Spirit and the community comes to understand the difference between what is good and what is bad.

This community then needs to be one with Father Daniel in that spirit of discernment. Of discerning what is good, and leave aside that which doesn't help us grow either in faith or as humans. So, pray for Father Daniel, and also for Father Tung because they both are here, to lead the community, to inspire the community, and to work with the community. And we pray that they and each one of us will announce the good news to the world.