

A Peanuts cartoon shows Charlie Brown warning Snoopy not to go near Lucy's house. Charlie says, "Snoopy I warn you don't go near Lucy today; she's having a Crab-in day." Instead of listening to Charlie's warning, Snoopy goes straight to Lucy's house and knocks on the door. When the grumpy, unhappy Lucy appears, Snoopy gives her a great big kiss. Then Snoopy trots off, saying to himself, "That's how you break up a Crab-in day."

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.

Today is Gaudete Sunday, Gaudete means rejoice. As Christians our joy comes from knowing the source of joy, Jesus Himself. Jesus said to His disciples, "I give you my joy, so that your joy may be complete." The Bible states, "the joy of the Lord is our strength." When Jesus gives us something as valuable as His joy, we want to thankfully embrace it.

Author Fr. James Martin wrote: Why are we naturally drawn to joyful people? He believes that joy is a sign of God's presence. We are drawn to joy because we are drawn to God. In Pope Francis book, "The joy of the Gospel", he reminds us of that joy is a priceless gift which comes from knowing Christ and His Word."

There are times when we allow ourselves to give away this precious gift of joy. A Pastor tells the story about accidentally pulling up to a full-service pump instead of the self-service. It wasn't until after he paid, did he realize that it cost him an extra 30 cents per gallon.

Once the Pastor figured out he paid an extra five dollars to fill up, he angrily complained to his co-workers and anyone else who would listen. He labeled the place the "full-service gas station robbery".

That night as the Pastor was reviewing his day, he realized that he sold his joy for five dollars. He then prayed, "Lord forgive me that something as valuable as joy, I gave away for so little."

Sometimes we can sell our joy to the person who cut us off in traffic or tailgating; or to the cashier who is checking us out too slowly; or because of a negative word or even an unfriendly look.

In the Gospels there were people who tried to take away Jesus' joy. When Jesus healed the man born blind, the religious leaders condemned Him for healing on the Sabbath and when Jesus was

celebrating and eating with Tax Collectors, the religious leaders condemned him for associating with sinners. We have all come across people want to take our joy, but they can only take if we surrender it to them.

There is a story about a taxi cab driver, name Tom who refused let anything to take his joy. One day a man hopped into Tom's cab and on his way to the airport, a car pulled out of a parking space and cut Tom off. Even though the man gave Tom a bad gesture, Tom just smiled and waved at the guy. The man in the cab said to Tom, "Why were you so polite to that crazy driver that cut you off, he almost ruined your cab and sent us to the hospital? Tom told the man about the law of the garbage truck. He explained that some people run around full of frustration, anger, and self-pity and as their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it. When they attempt to dump it on you, don't accept it, don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well and move on. Life is too short; I wake up in the morning and love the people who treat me right and pray for those who don't.

Besides letting others take our joy, sometimes we may allow worry to take away our joy. For a long time, I worried I wasn't doing enough, I wasn't holy enough, I good enough, I wasn't enough. At some point in my life, I realized three things: one: that there will always be more to do; two: that there will always be more room to grow; three: that God has made me to be enough. Embracing these three beliefs help me to worry less, which made more room for joy.

Are there not enough's in your life? We can tell ourselves, "We don't have enough money", "We don't have enough intelligence", we don't have enough time", "we are not attractive enough" "we don't have enough friends", we don't have enough faith". The not enough list can go on and on and each one of them takes away our joy.

I saw a MasterCard Commercial which goes: A man walks into a Baseball park with his eleven year old son: The commentators says, "two tickets to a baseball game 46 dollars;" the next scene shows them the concession stand, the commentators says, "two hot dogs, two sodas, 22 dollars"; the final scene shows the father and son in their seats talking to each other, the commentators says, "a real conversation between a father and a son, priceless."

The gift of joy of knowing Jesus is priceless. There is a song that goes: Lord you are precious than silver, Lord you are more costly than gold, Lord you are more beautiful than diamonds and nothing in this world compares with you.

As you prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, what gives you joy? Whatever it is which gives you joy inside, spend some time each with it each day this week.

Let us pray: Please pray after me: Lord Jesus, you rejoice when I come to you. Your gift of joy gives me strength inside. Help me Lord to show that joy in my face, in my eyes, in my smile and in my warm greeting. Amen and Amen.