

Advent 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

Cycle B

[Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11](#)

[1 Thessalonians 5:16-24](#)

[John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

Light two purple candles and one pink candle of your advent wreath.

This week the scriptures call us to delve more deeply into knowing ourselves and the real cause of our joy.

Opening prayer

The Magnificat <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/prayers/the-magnificat.html>

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

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,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Focus question

Describe a recent situation that made you happy. What was the cause of your joy? How long did it last?

Reflection

Anyone who has lived even a few years knows that it is impossible to be happy all the time. This third Sunday of Advent, traditionally called *Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday*, is filled with invitations to joy. Why be joyful? What is the real cause of our joy?

The people in this week's reading give us clear clues. The message from the prophet Isaiah, with its promises of glad tidings, liberty, release, favorite the dictation, was originally addressed to people standing in the wreckage of Jerusalem after they return from exile. At first glance, that does not seem to offer much reason for rejoicing. Mary song, the Magnificat, is the proclamation of a young woman whose reputation is on the line because she agrees to cooperate with God's plan. John the Baptist is living by meager means in the desert as he testifies to the light. What is the cause for joy?

We'll each of the settings gives us pause for thought, each of these people recognize who they are and who is God. Mary admits that she is a lowly servant. John clearly states that he is not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet, but only a voice calling to prepare the way of the Lord. There are no pretensions here. These are people who have their feet on the ground. They are also grounded in the conviction that God is at work. The cause of their joy is what God has done and will do. It is important during this time of Covid in a nation that seems more divided than ever, that we remember God is the source of our joy.

St. Paul reminds us that rejoicing is our business: giving thanks is our specialty, not because everything in our lives is wonderful, but because the God who calls us is faithful. The promises of God will be accomplished. If we are convinced of this, then our joy is not simply a fragile happiness that depends on the absence of all difficulties.

Grounded in the knowledge that we are not the Messiah, and grounded in the knowledge that God does great things, we can become partners in God's work of breaking glad tidings to the poor. What is rooted in the cause of our joy can become the cause of joy for others. While it is difficult at times to see God working in and around us in the midst of the pandemic, we must remember we are called to be the presence of God in our world. This should not only bring us comfort but also great joy to know that God is present with us and through us.

Consider the Scriptures and the questions below.

How does the word, phrase or image that struck you from this week's Scripture speak to your life otherwise of the community, your family or your world these days?

John was asked. "Who are you?" How would you answer the question isn't what put to you? Who are you? Who are you not?

Response and action

Be good news for the poor. Invite family members or friends to make a contribution in your name instead of buying you a Christmas gift to an area shelter or some other appropriate group.

Still looking for ways to make your dollars have impact? Check out fair trade options.

Make a blanket -knitted, sewed, no-sew fleece for the Linus project:

<https://www.projectlinus.org/donations/>

Donate supplies to St. Catherine's Shelter - <https://www.mercyhousingct.org/Our-Current-Needs.htm>

Or one of the service projects our youth ministry complete - [How to Support Service Projects](#)

Closing prayer

May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy,

And mat you entirely, spirit, soul, and body,

Be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who called you is faithful, and he will accomplish it.

Scripture reflections based upon the Quest publications from the Archdiocese of Hartford.