

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Patience, Hope, Joy

Gracious, merciful, and patient God,
your generosity rewards our complaint.
You reap a fruitful harvest when we plant
only hardness of heart.
Strengthen us in this season of hope,
grant patience in troubled times,
and lift our fearful hearts.

As the farmer waits for the fruitful harvest
and the desert anticipates abundant blossoms
may we, too, be blessed with patient hearts
as we approach the coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, December 11, 2016

Rejoice!



Today's Readings: Isaiah 35:1–6a, 10; Psalm 146:6–7, 8–9, 9–10; James 5:7–10; Matthew 11:2–11. The coming of Christ and his Kingdom will be understood when the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame leap. In today's readings, we are reminded by both Isaiah and Jesus that we do not need to look any further. The signs of healing and wholeness should be enough. Traditionally, the Third Sunday of Advent is a joyous reminder that God is already in our midst, even as we prepare to commemorate his coming into the world. In the world's terms, we know that the blind see, the deaf hear, weak knees and hearts are made firm, and even the arid desert is in full bloom. This is cause for rejoicing.

The words of Jesus in the Gospel are a challenge to look beyond the messenger, John the Baptist, and to realize the

truth of the message. Rejoice in the topsy-turvy world where those apparently blind can now see through the rough nomad in the dry desert and recognize a prophet. Rejoice in the prophetic message heard by the deaf, pulsating through the lame, and blooming with abundant flowers.

Today you can sing the refrain “Rejoice! Rejoice, O Israel! To thee shall come Emmanuel,” knowing that Emmanuel has come. Take some time today with your family or friends to recognize the goodness that you witness in your lives: where adversity can produce joy, where the deaf have heard some Good News and a change of heart is the result. Today is the day of which Isaiah prophesies when he says, “Sorrow and sighing shall flee,” because the ransomed of the Lord will obtain “joy and gladness.”



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

In 1531, a poor, uneducated Aztec Indian received the image of Mary on his tilma. Today is the feast of the season when Mary brings a renewed faith through an unexpected and unassuming Juan Diego to others. Advent invites us to share our faith to all the world simply and plainly. *Today's Readings: Revelation 11:19a, 12:1–6a, 10ab; Judith 13:18bcde, 19; Luke 1:26–38.*

Tuesday, December 13

St. Lucy, Virgin and Martyr

St. Lucy, a martyr of the early Church, is celebrated as a bringer of light. Though she was from Sicily, Italy, the most profound celebrations on this day are found in Sweden, where girls wear a crown of lit candles to serve breakfast. Today, light your Advent wreath candles for breakfast! *Today's Readings: Zephaniah 3:1–2, 9–13; Psalm 34:2–3, 6–7, 17–18, 19, 23; Matthew 21:28–32.*

Wednesday, December 14

St. John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

John of the Cross (1542–1591), mystic and doctor of the Church, authored the *Dark Night of the Soul*. This writing is an invitation to retreat into a dark place where, after much prayer and reflection, God is rediscovered. How appropriate that his feast day is on a dark Advent day. Find time to sit in the darkness and search where God has led you this season. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 45:6b–8, 18, 21b–25; Psalm 85:9ab, 10, 11–12, 13–14; Luke 7:18b–23.*

Thursday, December 15

Prepare the Way

Jesus challenges us today to take a second look, a second understanding of the message of John the Baptist. Of John and his message, he says “What did you go out to see?” He refers to soft robes, fine clothing, and to those who live a life of luxury. That is not the case with John, nor should it be with us. We prepare by living with integrity, whether that is in the wilderness or in a palace. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 54:1–10; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5–6, 11–12a, 13b; Luke 7:24–30.*

Friday, December 16

Let All the Nations Praise You!

Today's psalm response, “O God, let all the nations praise you!” underscores a message of universality that has been present this entire week. Emmanuel comes for all peoples, from Mexico to Sweden, from dark places to light, and from luxurious palaces to impoverished mountains and deserts. Take a second look at today's reading from Isaiah, sharing your responses over the dinner table. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 56:1–3a, 6–8; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 7–8; John 5:33–36.*

Saturday, December 17

Come, O Wisdom

The “O Antiphons,” which begin today, have been used since at least the eighth century to accompany the *Magnificat* at Evening Prayer, from December 17 through December 23. They are also the verses for the “Alleluia” chanted at Mass. Today we call on Wisdom to come and teach us the path of knowledge. *Today's Readings: Genesis 49:2, 8–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 3–4ab, 7–8, 17; Matthew 1:1–17.*

