

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Constant Love

Good and loving God,
in your mercy, you rescued your daughter
Zion from sin and death.
Indeed, you are our Savior.
Your constant love for your people
is unfathomable
and penetrates the depths of our souls.
Though your love for us is strong,
we often stray from your embrace
and indulge in our desires,
ignoring the needs of our sisters
and brothers.
By the power of the Holy Spirit,
transform our hearts and cleanse us from
our greed and dishonesty,
so that, on that final day, we may be
counted among the righteous.
And like Zion, give us hearts of joy
and erase our sadness and anxiety.
Give us voices to exalt and proclaim you,
the Holy One of Israel,
for your love has saved us and forever we
give you thanks.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 13, 2015

Rejoice

Today's Readings: Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Isaiah 12:2–3, 4, 5–6; Philippians 4:4–7; Luke 3:10–18. *Gaudete*, the Latin word for *rejoice*, is employed on this Third Sunday of Advent. On *Gaudete* Sunday, we rejoice over the many blessings that God has bestowed upon us. It is a day to rejoice because, as noted in the First Reading and Responsorial Psalm, God is in our midst and has saved us from the enemy. Joy wells up from the depth of our hearts in response to God's love.

You might want to read the First Reading again as though you are being referenced. The last lines describe God's profound love for us; he takes delight in restoring us to life. How do you rejoice in God and how does your joy rouse others to live in Christ?

This week, we also continue to reflect on our relationship with Christ and our need for conversion of mind and heart. Read or listen to the Gospel again. Imagine yourself approaching John, as did the groups in the Gospel, and asking, "What should I do?" Based on how John responds to the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers, what would he say to you? The tasks he gives to them have to do with being in right relationship. How must you change in order to be in right relationship? Think about your relationships with your family, friends, and children. Do your relationships reveal God's glory and lead people to a more intimate relationship with the Savior? In Baptism, we have been united to Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the grace to be transformed. Let us rejoice in God's love this week.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 14, 2015

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

John of the Cross is a great model during this Advent season. Though not all of us are called to a life of asceticism, we are called to surrender ourselves to our loving God. In the darkness of his self-denial, John saw the Light of Lights. He was filled with hope for the coming of the Messiah and a desire to faithfully witness God's love. Use the psalm refrain as your prayer today. Like St. John, may Christ teach you the path of life. *Today's Readings:* Numbers 24:2–7, 15–17a; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8–9; Matthew 21:23–27.

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Sinners Forgiven

The verse for the Gospel Acclamation asks the Lord to come quickly and forgive our sins. This short verse prepares us to hear the Gospel parable. Read the Gospel aloud and then ask yourself, "Do I respond more like the first son or the second son?" Jesus has come into the world so that sinners might be forgiven and have a share in eternal life. He points out that the outcasts of his day got the message but the religious leaders ignored "the way of righteousness." *Today's Readings:* Zephaniah 3:1–2, 9–13; Psalm 34:2–3, 6–7, 17–18, 19 and 23; Matthew 21:28–32.

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

God's Reign

Today's Gospel highlights that the Reign the Reign of God is at hand. Jesus' healings are a sign that he is the Messiah, the fulfillment of God's promise. In the First Reading, the sovereign power of God is proclaimed—"I am the Lord, and there is no other." Only God can save the oppressed and persecuted. What signs help you to know that God's reign is near? *Today's Readings:* Isaiah 45:6b–8, 18, 21c–25; Psalm 85:9ab and 10, 11–12, 13–14; Luke 7:18b–23.

Thursday, December 17, 2015

O Wisdom

Today marks a shift in our Advent preparations. The Scripture readings and the Liturgy of the Hours focus more directly on the coming of Christ. The "O" Antiphons begin today as well. The first antiphon, "O Wisdom," calls upon Christ to teach us the way of salvation. As we learn from the psalm, the earth will be filled with justice and peace at the coming of the Messiah. *Today's Readings:* Genesis 49:2, 8–10, Psalm 72:1–2, 3–4ab, 7–8, 17; Matthew 1:1–17.

Friday, December 18, 2015

O Adonai

It is clear from today's readings that Jesus is the ruler of the House of Israel; he is the one who comes to rescue the poor and afflicted. As the prophet Jeremiah foretold, Jesus, the Lord of Justice, restores God's people and brings them home to rest securely in God's house. God is with us! He has shown his mighty power and saved us! As you light the Advent wreath tonight, ask yourself, "Am I ready?" *Today's Readings:* Jeremiah 23:5–8, Psalm 72:1–2, 12–13, 18–19; Matthew 1:18–25.

Saturday, December 19, 2015

O Root of Jesse

The First Reading and the Gospel share some similarities. Both women in these readings are barren and receive news that God will bless them with a child. These events show God's power and his desire for his people to be free. From the moment of conception, both Samson and John are consecrated to God. Each works to deliver God's people. Samson fights against the Philistines, and John announces the coming Messiah who causes kings to be silent. Christ is a sign of God's love to the nations. Today, return to your Jesse Tree, thanking God for his work in Jesus' family and yours. *Today's Readings:* Judges 13:2–7, 24–25a; Psalm 71:3–4a, 5–6ab, 16–17; Luke 1:5–25.



© 2015 Liturgy Training Publications. 1-800-933-1800. Written by Timothy A. Johnston. Illustrated by Steve Musgrave. Scripture quotations are from *The New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright © 1993 and 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Permission to publish granted by the Archdiocese of Chicago, on February 5, 2015.

Keeping the Seasons

Reproducibles for Advent-Christmas 2015–2016