



## 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

# WITH HEARTS PREPARED

Praying, Talking, and Living  
God's Word during Advent

## PRAYING WITH GOD'S

# JOY

**Leader:**

We begin our time together, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:**

Loving God of Advent, in these last weeks before Christmas we find you in our hope and expectation. We find in you the joy of anticipation. Help us to prepare ourselves to celebrate your birth by caring for those who are less fortunate.

**All:** Amen.

**1<sup>st</sup> Reader:**

Joy is a wonderful feeling. During this week of Advent, we are reminded that the time of Christ's birth is soon upon us. We must celebrate the joys in our life and learn to remain faithful in that joy.

We are called this week to reflect on how we can be the light of joy for others. Listen to this story that speaks of the joy of giving:

"There once was a rugged and old looking man who walked up and down the beach with a garbage bag everyday. People noticed him bend over and pick something out of the sand then put it into his bag. No one ever asked him what he was doing nor wanted their children to go near him. Yet every day he walked the beach with his garbage bag.

One day a father bumped into the man and asked "why do you walk up and down the beach each day? What are you doing?"

The man replied, "I bend down and pick up the glass in the sand so the children will not be harmed. It brings me much joy to hear them having fun and knowing they will not be hurt by the shards of glass in the sand."

What are we doing to bring joy to others in our every day life? How are we removing the pieces of glass from the sand?

(Pause)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reader:**

As we continue to grow in our relationship with God, let us pray for those who are unable to feel joy. May God send them

people, like us, to bring joy in their life.

Let us now pray together the Lord's Prayer.

**All:** Our Father ...

**Leader:**

Creator God, you take joy in all your creation and in all your people. We live in a society and culture that understand the idea of "fun" but rarely knows how to find genuine joy. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, so that we may know the joy that only you can give. Help us to find joy through loving service to those in need and help us to find joy, O God, through faith and trust in you. Christ our light of joy may we light the world with your love.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:**

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.



# TALKING ABOUT GOD'S WORD



## Reader:

This week we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday which means "Rejoice!" The reason we light a pink candle the third week of Advent is to remind us that the joy of Christ's birth is soon upon us. We spend the season of Advent "preparing" our hearts and taking time to reflect on our relationship with God.

The Church wants us to stop and reflect during this point in the Advent Season. We stop to reflect on those areas in our life that remain dark. These dark areas in our life hinder our relationship with God. For us to truly rejoice in the birth of Christ, we must learn how we can enter fully into the joy of our new relationship with God. To truly enter into this joy we must reconcile ourselves to God.

Take a few minutes to discuss some of the feelings you experience when a friendship is broken or challenged by a disagreement.

(Pause)

God wants us to have a relationship with him. The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation calls us to recognize our failings and lay them before God. In presenting our shortcomings to God, we acknowledge the need to change our lives and seek conversion from our old ways and start a new life.

When we go to celebrate the Sacrament of reconciliation, we enter into a conversation with God. The priest is Christ's

representative to absolve a person of their sins. It is a challenge to be vulnerable by telling our deepest secrets before someone. However, since we are in conversation with God the priest is forbidden to repeat what is said in confession. This is known as the **Seal of Confession**. Therefore, it is important to declare those sins that are **venial** (serious offences against God's will that diminishes one's personal character) and **grave (mortal)** (actions that are against God's will and separate us from God, for example killing another human being). By laying our sins before God, we receive God's grace and grow in our relationship with God.

For us to receive God's grace, we perform penance. Penance challenges our hearts to become a better person living in the joy of the Lord. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that "interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, and end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed" (CCC #1431). By doing

penance with the intent to change, our hearts will begin to be transformed by the actions of our penance. Furthermore, we will also begin to include the actions we learn from our penance into our everyday life. Our transformation of heart will not be immediate, but through our struggles and the desire to change, we will find the true joy we seek. Our lives will still be challenged, but if we continue to grow in a conversion of heart with God, we will enter more fully into the joy of our relationship with God.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it so hard to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
2. From the material presented, what is the joy we receive from this sacrament?
3. This is a challenge for each of you: plan to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation.

## LIVING GOD'S WORD

For this week's act of service, there are three options available:

1. Each family member takes the time during the week to do one unexpected act of kindness for a stranger. For example, help them carry heavy groceries down the street or open a door for another person.
2. Each family member shares the gift of themselves to the parish community by helping out with the cleaning, decorating, or another task the parish needs completed.
3. As a family, share a discussion on ways you can bring joy the world and choose one of those ways by living it out in your community.