

Reflection Questions

- What thoughts of gratitude come to mind as you consider your recovery journey and preparation for Christmas?
- Are you hiding anything behind the walls of anxiety, mistrust, and isolation?
- Are you happy, joyous, and free?

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18A

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

2nd Reading: Philippeans 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

3rd Sunday of Advent



As men in recovery, we have great reason to rejoice as we await the coming of our Lord with expectant hope. We are witnessing God do miraculous things in our lives and in the lives of others, and the readings for the Third Sunday of Advent remind us to delight in His presence. The first reading aligns with our changing attitude as we begin recovery and seek renewal:

*The Lord has removed the judgment against you
he has turned away your enemies;
the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst,
you have no further misfortune to fear.*

*On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!
The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a mighty savior;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
and renew you in his love,
he will sing joyfully because of you,
as one sings at festivals.*

This tone is a major shift from the story many of us tell ourselves as we begin the journey of recovery. In our battle with active lust addiction, we've come to know spiritual poverty. As the cycle of addiction unfolds, the solution to our problems becomes *the* problem and our anxiety, mistrust, and isolation build. We get discouraged as we begin hiding some of our true needs from ourselves and others, often leaving us resentful and afraid.

By the grace of God, we've been uprooted and given another chance. We begin to experience the peace of Christ and the freedom that accompanies twelve-step recovery, one day at a time. This is very good news and is summarized by the words of Saint Paul in this week's second reading:

*Rejoice in the Lord always.
I shall say it again: rejoice!
Your kindness should be known to all.
The Lord is near.
Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God.
Then the peace of God that surpasses all
understanding
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

Upon being awoken to the Good News, it is natural for us to ask the same question the crowds of people ask John the Baptist in this week's gospel reading—*what should we do?* Showing kindness to all and allowing God to do His will in us, with us, and through us is a good start.

We hear a bit more about John the Baptist in this week's gospel reading:

*Now the people were filled with expectation,
and all were asking in their hearts
whether John might be the Christ.
John answered them all, saying,
I am baptizing you with water,
but one mightier than I is coming.
I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his
sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Surrender does not always come naturally, but if we exercise the first three steps of recovery through the lens of our baptism, we might experience it happen supernaturally. We can cooperate with this transformation process by working the remaining steps—taking a moral inventory, sharing it with others, asking God to remove defects of character that stand in the way of our usefulness to Him and others, and making amends. Along the way, we get to know peace, joy, and freedom thanks to the saving grace of God.