

## Reflection Questions

- How are you experiencing joy in recovery?
- What practical tools help you overcome the perceived need to be perfect?
- What helps you trust in the slow work of God?

## 3rd Sunday of Advent



### Serve the CIR Community this Christmas!

As we approach Christmas, we recognize that many people will be away from family members and loved ones this year. This can also be a challenging time for those in recovery who face additional seasonal temptations. We hope to have CIR members available online throughout Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. To volunteer for an hour or two of availability on Christmas Eve/Christmas Day, email [info@catholicinrecovery.com](mailto:info@catholicinrecovery.com). Thank you!

### Sunday Mass Readings This Week

**1st Reading:** Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

**Responsorial Psalm:** Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54

**2nd Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

**Gospel:** John 1:6-8, 19-28

We move another day closer to the coming of our Lord's nativity as we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent this week. This day is also known as *Gaudete Sunday*, which takes its name from the Latin word for "rejoice." We hear themes of joy throughout this Sunday's liturgy and are to embrace the hopeful anticipation of our Lord's return.

Henri Nouwen, an esteemed Catholic Theologian, compares the difference between joy and happiness. Whereas happiness is dependent upon external circumstances, joy is, "the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing—sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death—can take that love away." We learn in recovery that we can find joy in life even if those we love are not yet well—a discovery that may take some time to fully realize.

Saint Paul shares some guidelines with us in this week's Second Reading:

*Brothers and sisters:*

*Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.*

*In all circumstances give thanks,  
for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.*

*Do not quench the Spirit.*

*Do not despise prophetic utterances.*

*Test everything; retain what is good.*

*Refrain from every kind of evil.*

*May the God of peace make you perfectly holy  
and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body,  
be preserved blameless for the coming  
of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*The one who calls you is faithful,  
and he will also accomplish it.*

Saint Paul reminds us of several twelve-step principles. First, by admitting our powerlessness and need for a Power greater than ourselves, we remove the burden of finding our own redemption. Past efforts to make changes for ourselves or others may have been met with frustration because we were approaching it with our own motives and attitudes, as pure as they might have been.

Humility is a necessary component of recovery as it places our faith in the faithfulness of God. This is something worth rejoicing over every day, and we are to maintain gratitude and a prayerful heart in order to be of maximum service to God and others.

We are pursuing spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection. Recalling our need for help, even while we're getting better, keeps us in right-relationship with God. Along the way, we might get impatient. Hear the poetic words of French priest and philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:

"Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you; your ideas mature gradually—let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete."

God's plan for us will be revealed as long as we remain on the path of progress. Seeking Him without expectation will prepare us to remain open to His will. By doing so, we rejoice in the experience of being loved unconditionally and return the same love to those around us.