

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you sense God strengthening your heart or renewing your hope?
- What signs of healing—big or small—have you noticed in yourself or your family?
- How might God be inviting you to rejoice gently and honestly this Advent season?

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During *Grace in the Gathering*, you'll walk away with:

- A personal plan for navigating social events with confidence
- Real-time strategies to stay centered in recovery
- Serenely handle family dynamics, stress, pressure, and triggers
- Encouragement to celebrate with joy without compromising your recovery

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FAMILY & FRIENDS RECOVERY REFLECTION



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

We have many reasons to rejoice as we wait for the coming of Jesus with expectant hope. As family members and friends affected by addiction, we witness God do miraculous things in our own lives and in the lives of those walking this journey with us. The Third Sunday of Advent (also known as Gaudete Sunday) invites us to notice this quiet, steady renewal—to see how grace has already begun to bloom where there was once only fear, strain, and uncertainty.

This Sunday's First Reading sets a tone of renewal and joy (Isaiah 35:1-6a):

Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing.

Family life touched by addiction can feel like a landscape of feeble hands and weak knees. Many of us have spent years trying to rescue, manage, or compensate for a loved one's behavior. We may carry weariness, fear, resentment, or confusion. These burdens can make our hearts feel frightened and our spirits tired. But God offers a word of comfort: *Be strong. Fear not. I am coming to save you.*

Family recovery allows God to strengthen us from the inside out. We learn to detach with love rather than control from fear. We practice boundaries, compassion, and patience. We discover that healing is not limited to the one struggling with addiction—God restores the whole family by renewing our minds, calming our emotions, and giving us tools to respond differently.

This Sunday's Gospel offers reassurance that God's healing is real and present. John the Baptist, imprisoned and discouraged, sends his followers to Jesus with an honest question: "Are You the One who brings the healing we hope for?" Jesus replies by pointing to signs of restoration (Matthew 11:2-5):

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to him with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."

These signs mirror the slow awakening we experience in recovery. Where we were once blind, truth becomes clear. Where fear paralyzed us, we begin to walk in freedom. Parts of our hearts that felt deadened by shame come alive again. And we discover the good news of God's mercy through the love of our recovery communities.

Gaudete Sunday invites us to rejoice—not because everything is fixed, but because Christ is near. God is already at work in the deserts of our lives, making them bloom one day at a time.

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

SECOND READING James 5:7-10

GOSPEL Matthew 11:2-11