

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

We have many reasons to rejoice as we wait for the coming of Jesus with expectant hope. As adult children of dysfunctional homes, we witness God do miraculous things in our own lives and in the lives of those healing alongside 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, confusion, and emotional dryness.

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

The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song... 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.

Many adult children know what it feels like to live with “feeble hands” and “weak knees.” Growing up in dysfunction can leave us uncertain, hypervigilant, or afraid of emotional closeness. Our hearts may still carry old fears—of conflict, abandonment, or being misunderstood. God speaks directly to these places: *Be strong. Fear not. I am coming to save you.*

Recovery provides a space where God strengthens what childhood wounded—our sense of identity, worth, and connection. We learn to trust safe people, set boundaries, and let go of perfectionism or people-pleasing. Gradually, we begin to experience emotional stability where there was once only chaos.

John the Baptist's question in this Sunday's Gospel resonates deeply with adult children who long for reassurance: “Can healing truly happen for someone with my past?” Jesus responds with signs of transformation (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 reflect our inner healing. Blindness lifts as we recognize family patterns that shaped us. We begin to “walk” as we practice new ways of relating to others. Parts of us that felt emotionally “poor” receive good news through the fellowship of recovery and the love of God.

Gaudete Sunday does not demand a loud or dramatic joy. It invites a quiet rejoicing—a recognition that God is strengthening our weakness, healing our wounds, and restoring joy to our inner life. Advent assures us that Christ is near, guiding us toward freedom with patience and gentleness.

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

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you sense God strengthening old emotional wounds or fears?
- What new movement—clarity, confidence, healing—have you noticed in your recovery?
- How is God inviting you to experience joy in this season, even in small ways?

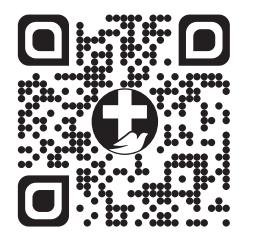
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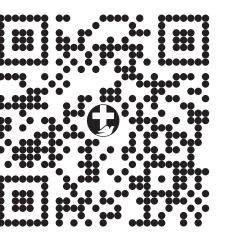
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CIR ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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- Serenely handle family dynamics, stress, pressure, and triggers
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