

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

We have many reasons to rejoice as we wait for the coming of Jesus with expectant hope. As people recovering from lust addiction, we witness God do miraculous things in our own lives and in the lives of those who share 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 secrecy, shame, and discouragement.

This Sunday's First Reading sets a tone of renewal 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.

Lust addiction weakens the foundations of our emotional and spiritual life. Hands become “feeble” when shame prevents us from reaching out. Knees become “weak” when we cannot stand on our own integrity. Hearts become “frightened” when we fear that honesty will cost us love or respect. But God meets us with compassion, not condemnation. He

strengthens what addiction has weakened, giving us courage to live in truth.

In recovery, we discover that God does not wait until we are strong to begin healing us—He strengthens us in the very moment we turn to Him. He teaches us accountability, humility, and self-control. He guides us toward deeper relationships built on clarity rather than secrecy, connection rather than fantasy.

John the Baptist also needed reassurance in this Sunday's Gospel. From prison, he sends his disciples to Jesus with a question many of us have asked in early sobriety: “Are You really the One who can heal me?” Jesus responds 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 parallel our own journey. Blindness gives way to sight as we admit truth and face reality. Weakness becomes movement as we practice sobriety and accountability. The “poor”—those emptied by compulsion—receive good news through fellowship,

grace, and the promise of transformation. Where lust once drained our joy, Christ restores it.

Gaudete Sunday calls us to rejoice not in perfection, but in progress. Every day of sobriety is a reason to give thanks. Every moment of honesty is a moment of freedom. Christ is near, strengthening our weakness, renewing our minds, and teaching us how to love.

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 is God strengthening you in your recovery from lust?
- What signs of healing or transformation do you “hear and see” in your journey?
- How might God be inviting you to rejoice in small victories this Advent?

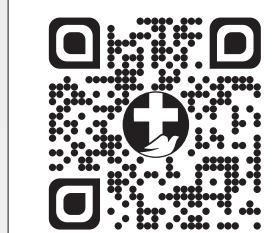
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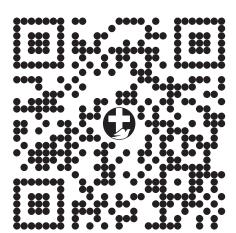
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- Serenely handle family dynamics, stress, pressure, and triggers
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