

Third Sunday of Advent



We have many reasons to rejoice as we wait for the coming of Jesus with expectant hope. As people in recovery, we witness God do miraculous things for us and our fellows each day. The Scripture readings for the Third Sunday of Advent remind us to delight in His presence. The First Reading this Sunday sets the tone for an attitude of renewal:

*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.*

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 lust addiction, sexual compulsions and other unhealthy attachments, we came 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 got discouraged as we began 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 12-step recovery. This is very good news as we await the coming of our Lord with patient trust. This Sunday's Second Reading guides our efforts to endure whatever we may face:

*Be patient, brothers and sisters,
until the coming of the Lord.
See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the
earth,
being patient with it
until it receives the early and the late rains.
You too must be patient.
Make your hearts firm,
because the coming of the Lord is at hand.
Do not complain, brothers and sisters,
about one another,
that you may not be judged.
Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates.
Take as an example of hardship and patience,
brothers and sisters,
the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

Reflection Questions

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 Sunday'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. Setting aside self-centered expectations provides an opportunity for God to make all things new.

The Gospel of Luke tells us a bit more about John the Baptist:

*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 diving further into the Twelve Steps—making a thorough moral inventory of ourselves, sharing it with God and 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.

- What thoughts of gratitude come to mind as you consider your recovery journey and preparation for Christmas?
- How can you relate to the cycle of addiction and the unfolding of anxiety, mistrust, and isolation?
- How have you experienced being happy, joyous, and free as a result of working a program of recovery?

Christmas Marathon Meeting

Once again, Catholic in Recovery will host a Christmas Marathon Meeting for anyone seeking fellowship and needing support on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

- Marathon begins at 8a ET Christmas Eve (12/24) and concludes at 10p ET Christmas Day (12/25)
- Volunteers are needed to commit for one hour (or more)
- Invite a friend or others from your CIR meeting to join
- Sign up at: tinyurl.com/CIR-Christmas-Marathon-2022
- More information coming soon for anyone seeking to drop in on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

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