

Third Sunday of Advent



We move closer to the coming of our Lord's Nativity as we approach the Third Sunday of Advent. 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 called to embrace the hopeful anticipation of our Lord's return.

Fr. Henri Nouwen offers a comparison 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." Having been given a new opportunity to participate in God's grace through recovery from lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and unhealthy love attachments, we know that God is faithful to us even when we can't return a fraction of that faith.

Saint Paul shares some guidelines with us in this Sunday'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 12-step principles. First, by admitting our powerlessness over lust and need for a savior, we remove the burden of finding our own redemption. Past efforts to make lifestyle changes might have been met with frustration because we were approaching it with self-seeking motives and expectations.

Humility is a key component of recovery as it places our faith in the faithfulness of God, not in our own abilities, strength, or intellect. This is something worth rejoicing over every day and we are to maintain gratitude and a prayerful heart to be of maximum service to God and others.

Reflection Questions

We are pursuing spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection. Recalling our need for help, even while we're getting better, helps keep us in a proper relationship with God. Along the way, we might get impatient. Thus, we turn to 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 if we remain on the pathway of recovery. Keep seeking him without expectations and remain open to His will. By doing so, we rejoice in the experience of being loved unconditionally and celebrate opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with others.

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

Weekly Advent Candle Lighting & Prayer

Join fellow CIR members every Sunday this Advent for a virtual candle lighting ceremony and reflection

- Gatherings will meet on Zoom **Sundays during Advent at 5p ET/2p PT** and last about an hour
- Invite your family members to join and participate!
- 4th Sunday of Advent is December 24 and will kick off our annual Christmas Marathon Meeting
- Find meeting information and login details at catholicinrecovery.com/virtual-meeting-schedule

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

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

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

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