

Third Sunday of Advent



We have many great reasons to rejoice as we wait for the coming of Jesus with expectant hope. As people in recovery, we are witnessing God do miraculous things for us and others. The Scripture readings for the Third Sunday of Advent remind us to delight in His presence. The first reading this Sunday describes the wonders of God and how He delights in us:

*The Lord has removed the judgment against you
he has turned away your enemies;
the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst,
you have no further misfortune to fear.
On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!
The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a mighty savior;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
and renew you in his love,
he will sing joyfully because of you,
as one sings at festivals.*

This tone is a major shift from the story that many of us tell ourselves as we begin the journey of recovery. In our battle with addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we've come to know spiritual poverty. As this dark cycle unfolds, the solution to our problems becomes a problem and our anxiety, mistrust, and isolation build. Then, we typically get discouraged and start hiding some of our true needs from ourselves and others, leading to resentment and fear.

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 and is summarized by the words of Saint Paul in this Sunday's second reading:

*Rejoice in the Lord always.
I shall say it again: rejoice!
Your kindness should be known to all.
The Lord is near.
Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God.
Then the peace of God that surpasses all
understanding
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

Upon our awakening, it is natural to ask the same question the crowds of people ask John the Baptist in this Sunday's Gospel reading—*what should we do?* Showing up for recovery, and allowing God to do His will in us, with us, and through us is a good start.

We hear a bit more about John the Baptist from Luke's Gospel:

*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 the transformation process by working the remaining steps—taking and sharing a moral inventory, asking God to remove defects of character that stand in the way of serving Him and others, making amends, staying connected, and giving back to others. Along the way, we get to know peace, hope, and our identity as beloved children of God, who sings joyfully because of us.

Reflection Questions

- How have you experienced God delighting in you? How does that differ from your previous experience and understanding of God?
- With what do you relate most to from today's reflection? Explain.
- Share what's going on in your life (related to recovery) and/or how God has been present.

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18