

3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Rejoice always! Rejoice!

Almighty God,
giver of all that is good,
you have done glorious things.
You have turned away our enemies and
removed misfortune.
Help us to be unafraid,
to not be discouraged,

to give to those who want.
We sing praise,
rejoicing always, rejoicing,
knowing that you are our salvation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 15, 2024

The Lord Is Near



*Today's readings: Zephaniah 3:14–18;
Isaiah 12:2–6; Philippians 4:4–7; Luke 3:10–18.*

On this Third Sunday of Advent the second reading proclaims, “The Lord is near.” We have arrived at the halfway point of Advent.

In today’s first reading, the prophet Zephaniah speaks of the restoration of Jerusalem after the nation’s sinfulness. He invites us to not be discouraged, but rather to “Shout for joy... / Sing joyfully” and “Be glad and exult with all your heart.” The faithful today, like the people who

approached John the Baptizer in the gospel, are filled with expectation.

This week, to continue to invite God to prepare your heart for the full joy of Christmas and dedicate time every day to pray. As apostle Paul suggests in his letter to the Philippians, “with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.” Begin your prayer by expressing your joy and gratitude to God. How will the Lord’s nearness inspire you to share your loving-kindness with others? End your prayer by resting in the peace of God.



Illustration: the Advent O Antiphons (O Come, O Come Emmanuel)

This Week at Home

Monday, December 16

Trust

In today's gospel, religious leaders question Jesus' authority as he taught and ministered. At times, you might find yourself faltering in your faith and may question God's authority in your life. Spend some time journaling about your trust in the Lord. How have you questioned /doubted the Lord? After your reflection, pray with today's psalm, then choose a line or phrase that stands out to you, calling it to mind throughout your day. Ask for the strength to trust in Jesus. Today's readings: Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17; Psalm 25:4-9; Matthew 21:23-27.

Tuesday, December 17

O Wisdom

The "O" antiphons date back to around the eighth century. They accompany the Magnificat during evening prayer between today and December 24. You can Google the full set or find them as the stanzas of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel. As the final days of Advent are entered, dedicate time each day to meditate with the "O" antiphon of the day. Today's antiphon is "O Wisdom of God our Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!" How can you look to Wisdom to guide you this week? Today's readings: Gen 49:2, 8-10; Psalm 72:1-8, 17; Matt 1:1-17.

Wednesday, December 18

O Sacred Lord

An angel appears to Joseph in a dream and, similarly to Mary's call at the annunciation, tells him to "not be afraid." (BNA) Joseph courageously responds by taking Mary "into his home" and faithfully accepting his role as Jesus' father. Today's "O" antiphon is "O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai: come to rescue us with your mighty power!" As you pray with the antiphon, consider how you might courageously respond to God. Today's readings: Jeremiah 23:5-8, Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; Matthew 1:18-25.

Thursday, December 19

You are my hope, Lord

In today's gospel, the angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah and tells him that Elizabeth, his barren wife, will give birth to John (the Baptizer, Jesus' cousin). Questioning Gabriel, Zechariah notes that he is "an old man, and [Elizabeth] is advanced in years." Gabriel renders Zechariah speechless because of his disbelief. As you light the three candles on your Advent wreath today, pray for those who struggle with their faith. Consider how you might "speak of the mighty works of the Lord." Today's readings: Judges 13:2-7, 24-25; Psalm 71:3-6, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25.

Friday, December 20

The Lord is with you

The angel greets Mary, saying, "Hail, full of grace." Today you might ponder how Mary may have received those words. Spend time with the gospel reading, using the prayer form *lectio divina*, a slow and repetitive reading and praying with Scripture. In this practice, a phrase that catches your attention is repeated and meditated upon in prayer. At the end of your prayer, pray for pregnant women and those who will give birth today in all manner of circumstances. Today's readings: Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24:1-6; Luke 1:26-38.

Saturday, December 21

O Radiant Dawn

Today's "O" antiphon is "O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death." As you pray with today's antiphon, take a moment to pray for those who may "dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death" near you. Dedicate time to serve them this weekend: visit a shelter, a soup kitchen, someone who is homebound, or reach out to a person in mourning. Today's readings: Zephaniah 3:14-18; Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Luke 1:39-45.