

Third Sunday of Advent

17th December 2023



*I exult for joy in the Lord.
Isaiah 61*



Advent is traditionally a penitential time in preparation for Christmas. However, the Third Sunday is an exception. The theme is one of joy and happiness. This weekend, there is a relaxation of the penitential mood, a small opening to the coming celebrations, an anticipation, like a “trailer” of the coming joy of Christmas.

The theme of joy is not explicit in the Gospel but it is there under the surface. It speaks about John the Baptist, and the Gospel is clear that the religious leaders in Jerusalem were puzzled as to John’s role and identity. Yet, John’s role is plain: He is to clear the way for the coming of Jesus, who is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. There is an air of expectation and excitement for Jesus to appear.

Like John, we are not the Light but we are called, by our baptism, to bear witness to the Light by all we say and do. To be honest, could we say that that is really an accurate description of our daily life?

So ask yourselves the questions the religious leaders put to John: “What do you say of yourself?” Who are you really? What is your role in life? This is not a question about your career or what you spend most of your time doing. What is my ultimate role? Why do I do the things that I do? Is it just a question of money or of being busy and active? John the Baptist knew the answer to that question. How many of us do?

Now is a time for us to count our blessings. What better way to express our thanks for those blessings than by joyfully using them for the benefit of others? “Let your light shine before others that they may SEE your good works and come to praise our Father in heaven.”

This week let us pray for:

- ♦ strength and support for all those facing difficulties;
- ♦ all those who are feeling isolated;
- ♦ that the joys which God has given us are shared with all;
- ♦ all those connected to our community who are unwell, upset or mourning.



This week, the Church asks us to offer our thanks and prayers for the Word of God, which enlightens us and educates us all.

Blessed Lord,

*who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,
that, through patience, and the comfort of Your holy Word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen*

Spirit of Hope,

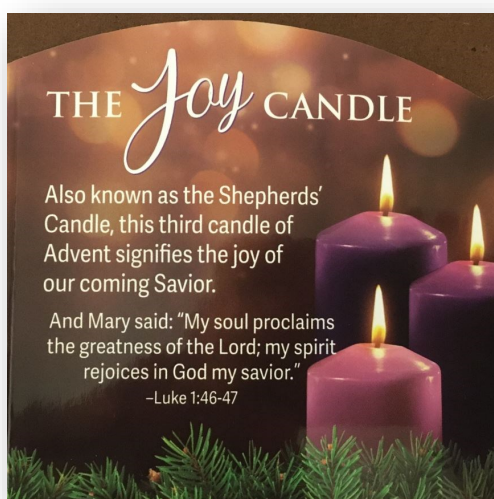
We take refuge in your wisdom and grace.

May we become beacons of joy

to all those around us

and in a world that aches for peace.

Amen.



**“Christian joy, like hope,
has its foundation in the
faithfulness of God, in
the certainty that He
always keeps his
promises,”
Pope Francis**