

Awaiting His Presence

The Gift of One Another

Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

Today is Gaudete Sunday, the halfway point in our Advent journey. The word *Gaudete* means rejoice, and today's readings invite us to lift our spirits because the coming of the Lord is drawing near. In the midst of our joy, we are called to recognize the gift of one another.

In the first reading, the prophet Zephaniah urges us to "shout for joy," to "sing joyfully," to "be glad," and to "exult" with all our hearts. In the second reading, St. Paul tells us to "rejoice in the Lord always" and to let our kindness "be known to all."

In the Gospel, St. John the Baptist is with us once again. Last week, he challenged us to repent. This week, he warns that repentance is not just a matter between ourselves and God. True repentance means that we must change our lives, and the change we are called to make is directly related to how we treat other people.

He tells us that we must share food and clothing with people in need. We



POINTS TO PONDER

In what ways do you rejoice in the Lord?

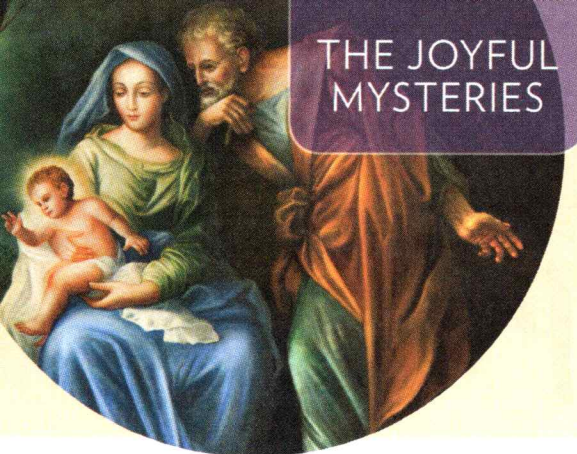
How do you show kindness to people in need?

How do you recognize other people as a gift from God?

must live and work honestly, never cheating or threatening anyone. When we act justly — according to God's will — we will find joy not only in our own lives but in our relationships with others. We must begin to see other people as our brothers and sisters. We must see them as a gift from God.

In his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis echoes the message of St. John the Baptist: "We may think that we give glory to God only by our worship and prayer, or simply

by following certain ethical norms. It is true that the primacy belongs to our relationship with God, but we cannot forget that the ultimate criterion on which our lives will be judged is what we have done for others. Prayer is most precious, for it nourishes a daily commitment to love. Our worship becomes pleasing to God when we devote ourselves to living generously, and allow God's gift, granted in prayer, to be shown in our concern for our brothers and sisters" (104).



THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

The Third Week of Advent is the perfect time to pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, which take us back in time to the birth and childhood of Jesus.

First Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38)

Second Joyful Mystery: The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–56)

Third Joyful Mystery: The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1–21)

Fourth Joyful Mystery: The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:22–40)

Fifth Joyful Mystery: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–52)

The O Antiphons

The O Antiphons are seven verses in the Liturgy of the Hours that contain powerful pleas for the coming of the Lord. They are chanted or recited during vespers on the last seven days of Advent. You might want to pray the O Antiphons this week with your family or reflect on them privately during personal prayer time.

December 17: *O Sapientia (O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.)*

December 18: *O Adonai (O Sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.)*

December 19: *O Radix Jesse (O Flower of Jesse's stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.)*

December 20: *O Clavis David (O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of heaven: come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and lead your captive people into freedom.)*

December 21: *O Oriens (O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.)*

December 22: *O Rex Gentium (O King of all the Nations, the only joy of every human heart; O keystone of the mighty arch of man, come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.)*

December 23: *O Emmanuel (O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.)*

If you take the first letter of each Latin title starting backward at December 23, you will form the Latin words *Ero Cras*, which means, "Tomorrow I will come."

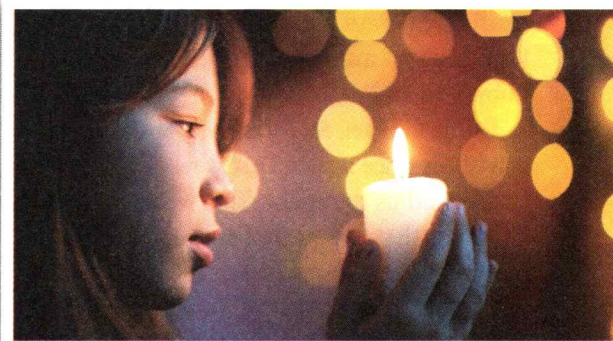
Advent Prayer

Lord, help me to recognize the gift of other people. Open my eyes to the needs of others. Instill in me a spirit of generosity. Help me to recognize your presence in every person who touches my life. Amen.

Joy-filled Resolutions for the Third Week of Advent

1. Decide to do something nice for someone every day. It might be an encouraging word, a phone call, a note of appreciation, or a little act of kindness.
2. Get rid of grudges. Let go of any anger or resentment you might be holding onto.
3. Pray for patience. If you find yourself becoming anxious or upset with another person, ask the Lord for the gift of patience.

FAMILYFOCUS



One of the best parts of family celebrations is sharing family stories. Storytelling sharpens children's listening skills and activates imaginations. Stories about sacramental moments in the family — baptisms, first Communions, etc. — help children put faith into a family context.

Encourage family members to reach out to people in need during this holiday season. Donate food, clothing, or toys as Christmas gifts. Teach children to give the gift of themselves by visiting someone who is elderly or homebound.