

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Longing

God, our faithful Lord,
you accomplish your will in all things.
We await the fulfillment of your promises.
We long for the fullness of your kingdom,
and that longing is our ceaseless prayer.
Until the advent of that glorious day,
lift up our hearts in unwavering joy.
Show us the light that has already come into
our world,

so that we may give you thanks in all that
we do.
Keep us holy and blameless
as we undertake works of justice and
promote peace,
so that others may see and hear and know
your goodness,
and be drawn to your light.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 13, 2020

Expectations



Today's Readings: Isaiah 61:1–2a, 10–11; Luke 1:46–48, 49–50, 53–54; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24; John 1:6–8, 19–28. St. Paul tells the Christians in Thessalonica to discern carefully whether a word or action is truly from God, but he also warns them not to oppose the action of God's Spirit simply because it is new or unfamiliar to them. A few decades earlier some people wondered if John the Baptist was acting according to God's Spirit. They questioned him thoroughly, but despite John's testimony, they refused to believe that God had sent him. They did not rejoice in his words because John did not fit their expectations.

Although the words of our First Reading are beautiful and compelling, some people did not believe this prophecy

because their experience was very different. The prophet describes the glorious restoration of Israel, but decades of ruin made the fulfillment of that promise seem remote. People struggled to rejoice in the prophet's words.

When God doesn't meet our expectations, we struggle to rejoice, too. We may question what, if anything, God is doing. As we light the pink candle of our Advent wreath, we ask God to permeate our darkness, especially our perplexed hearts. We ask God to help us see all that God is doing and wants to do through us. We also ask God to help us meet his expectations for us: expectations that we will always seek his light and rejoice and give thanks in the light we will find.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 14

Authority

Balaam has been hired to curse Israel, but instead he blesses God's people. He insists that he speaks for God. When the elders in the Gospel passage ask Jesus by what authority he speaks, he turns their question back on them. He asks these leaders to make that judgment themselves. They abdicate their authority by refusing to answer. In time, Jesus' words, like Balaam's, are proved true. Pray that all who possess authority submit to the authority of God. *Today's Readings: Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9; Matthew 21:23-27.*

Tuesday, December 15

Despite the Delay

Zephaniah condemns the people for failing to obey God. They are like the second son in the parable who says he will do his father's will but then doesn't. The first son rebels against his father, but something makes him change his mind. Jesus commends those who obey God, no matter how long it takes them to do so. Jesus then rebukes those who profess their faithfulness but persist in their disobedience. What are some promises that you have made that you have not yet fulfilled? *Today's Readings: Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23; Matthew 21:28-32.*

Wednesday, December 16

He Has Come

John the Baptist wanted people to repent in order to receive God's mercy. Jesus, by contrast, offered God's mercy in order to inspire people to repent. Upon questioning Jesus, John is invited to examine Jesus' ministry and decide for himself. Jesus' ministry evokes the life-giving work of God that we hear about in Isaiah. Read slowly through the First Reading, and pray for God to transform our world. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 45:6c-8, 18, 21c-25; Psalm 85:9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14; Luke 7:18b-23.*

Thursday, December 17

Titles

The First Reading conveys strength, while Matthew presents an orderly progression of the generations that culminates in the birth of Jesus. Despite the image of strength, Jesus is not the strong and mighty Messiah that people expect, nor does his ministry go as they would have planned it. Look up the "O" Antiphons and reflect upon how Jesus fulfills these titles. *Today's Readings: Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17; Matthew 1:1-17.*

Friday, December 18

Totally New

Jeremiah draws on Israel's past as he assures them that God will lead them again through the difficult times they are facing. Joseph had no such experiences to draw from when he learned of Mary's pregnancy. He had to hope without knowing what was happening and without knowing what he was hoping for. Despite whatever doubt he might have felt, he obeys God immediately. Volunteer at or make a donation to a crisis pregnancy center. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; Matthew 1:18-25.*

Saturday, December 19

A Muted Response

By bearing and rearing children, the women of ancient times ensured the continuation of their families and tribes. Manoah's wife and Elizabeth would have felt neglected or even punished by God because they did not have children. When these women discover that they are pregnant, they rejoice. Zechariah's response is muted: he either does not believe the angel or does not trust the experience he is having. Consider how you have failed to accept what God is doing in your life. Discuss this during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. *Today's Readings: Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Psalm 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25.*

