



The Catholic Community of Divine Savior

Family Faith Focus

Volume 9, Issue 20

December 13, 2020

Dates to Remember

- December 12: 4:00 PM Mass
- December 13 9:00 AM Mass
- Please see our parish website for reservation information and links to view Sunday or weekday Masses online.

Gaudete Sunday

Today is the Sunday of joy. In the liturgy the invitation rings out several times to rejoice, why? Because the Lord is near. Christmas is near. The Christian message is called the gospel (good news), an announcement of joy for all people. Christian joy, like hope, is founded on God's fidelity, on the certainty that God always keeps his promises. The prophet Isaiah exhorts those who have lost their way and have lost heart to entrust themselves to the faithfulness of the Lord, for God's salvation will not delay in bursting into their lives. All those who have encountered Jesus along the way experience a serenity and joy in their hearts that nothing and no one can take away. Our joy is Jesus Christ, his faithful love is inexhaustible!

— Pope Francis

Third Sunday of Advent

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.

And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'*" as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**



Sunday Gospel Connection: December 13, 2020

The Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Gospel Background: This Sunday's Gospel invites us to continue our reflection on the person and mission of John the Baptist. Today we depart from the Gospel of Mark and read a selection from the Gospel of John.

The Gospel for today combines a brief passage from the prologue to John's Gospel with a report about John the Baptist. As in Mark's Gospel, the Gospel of John contains no birth narrative. Instead, John's Gospel begins with a theological reflection that has come to be called the "prologue." This prologue places the story of Jesus in its cosmological framework. It speaks of Jesus' existence with God since the beginning of time. In John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the culmination of the Word, the light that is coming into the world's darkness.



Following this prologue, John reports on the ministry of John the Baptist. We learn about the attention that John the Baptist received from the Jewish authorities. Messengers from the Jewish priests, the Levites and the Pharisees question John about his identity and the meaning of the baptisms that he is performing. John's Gospel uses these questions to establish the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. John the Baptist is not the Messiah, nor is he Elijah or the Prophet. In John's denials, we hear echoes of the kind of messianic expectations that were common in first-century Palestine.

The only affirmative response that John the Baptist gives is when he quotes the prophet Isaiah. Upon answering the next question, John announces that the savior they seek is already among them, but as yet unrecognized. John's response highlights for us an important Advent theme: Jesus has already come into the world as our savior. During Advent, we pray that we will be able to recognize Jesus' presence in our midst. Advent also reminds us that Jesus will come again to fulfill the promise of salvation. We pray that we will continue to be watchful as we anticipate that great day.

The third Sunday of Advent is also called *Gaudete Sunday*. *Gaudete*, a Latin word which means "rejoice," is taken from the entrance antiphon for Sunday's Mass. This theme is echoed in today's second reading from the first Letter to the Thessalonians. It is a reminder that Advent is a season of joy because our salvation is already at hand.

Family Connection: In family life, we learn to trust other people for protection and care. This experience of trust within the family enables children to believe us when we testify about our faith in Jesus. John the Baptist was believed by those who heard him because he helped them to recognize Jesus in their midst. In our family life, we hope and pray that we lead one another to recognize Jesus' presence in our world.

As you gather as a family, recall that during the Advent season we are invited to pay particular attention to the signs of Jesus' presence in our world. Consider some of the signs of Jesus' presence that you have experienced. During Advent, we remember how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. Read together today's Gospel, John 1:6-8,19-28. Discuss the signs of Jesus' presence in our world that you named and explain what these signs tell us about God and God's love for us. Pray together that your family will be led to recognize that Jesus is present among us. Read and pray together the psalm for today's Mass, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).

For more information and Sunday Connection resources visit:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/third-sunday-of-advent-cycle-b-sunday-connection/>

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Canticle of Mary (Magnificat)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

*He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.*

*He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.*

Luke 1:46-55

O Antiphons

The O Antiphons are prayed on the seven days before Christmas Eve during Evening Prayer. Each antiphon begins with O and addresses Jesus by a title that refers to Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah. The Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is based on the O Antiphons.



December 17: **O Wisdom of our God Most High,**
guiding creation with power and love:
Come to teach us the path of
knowledge!

December 18: **O Leader of the House of Israel,**
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
Come to rescue us with your mighty
power!

December 19: **O Root of Jesse's stem,**
sign of God's love for all his people:
Come to save us without delay!

December 20: **O Key of David,**
opening the gates of God's eternal
Kingdom:
Come and free the prisoners of
darkness!

December 21: **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.

December 22: **O King of all nations** and keystone
of the Church:
Come and save man, whom you
formed from the dust!

December 23: **O Emmanuel,** our King and Giver
of Law:
Come to save us, Lord our God!

—Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers

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

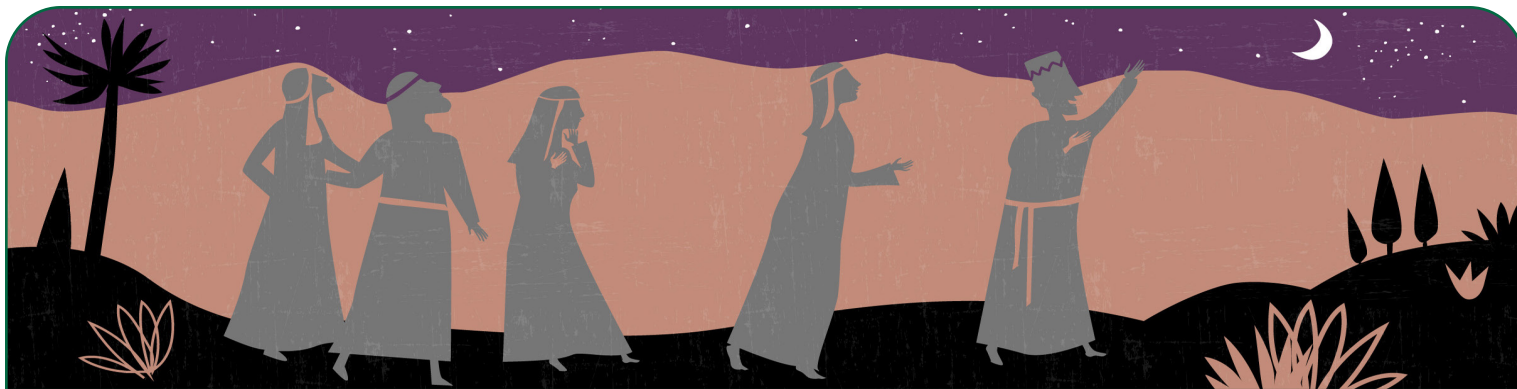


Today's Readings: Isaiah 61:1–2a, 10–11; Luke 1:46–48, 49–50, 53–54; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24; John 1:6–8, 19–28. St. Paul tells the Christians in Thessalonica to discern carefully whether a word or action is truly from God, but he also warns them not to oppose the action of God's Spirit simply because 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.*

