

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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Third Week of Advent 2021

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1st Reading: *Zephaniah 3:14-18A*

2nd Reading: *Philippians 4:4-7*

Gospel: *Luke 3:10-18*

We made it to the third Sunday of Advent, the midpoint of this preparatory season. Advent recalls the two comings of Christ: during the first two Sundays, the Church focuses on the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time; and from December 12 through Christmas Eve, our attention moves toward the remembrance of Christ's coming in human form on Christmas. This shift is marked by a lighter mood and a heightened sense of joyous anticipation in the readings. Both the first and second readings reflect this joy.



This Sunday is traditionally referred to as *Gaudete* Sunday, the Latin word meaning "rejoice." Paul tells the Philippians (and us) to "rejoice in the Lord always." Paul reminds us to choose joy, that it is in looking to God that we can truly rejoice. Now consider that Paul writes this from a prison cell in Rome, arrested because of his belief in Christ Jesus. So when he tells us that we can rejoice in the Lord always, he really means *always*.

Paul's profound example encourages us to remember that no matter what is happening in our lives – no matter how difficult – we can always rejoice in the Lord who loves us unconditionally, a Savior who promises to be with us through sorrow, anxiety, loss – even this pandemic.

There's just about two weeks of Advent left, days of sacredness inviting us on a journey to prepare our hearts and lives for the presence of God among us, where we leave the place of our birth to journey to the birthplace of another. It is an invitation to renewal - to receive comfort and hope in the deep of winter, and to be immersed in the eternal unchanging nature of God. The challenge of Advent, of this time leading up to Christmas, is to find new hopes, to think differently about what can be, to find joy in the everydayness of each day. Are we ready to believe that God is ready to work in us, to help us hang on to joy? Are we ready to receive the promise of God's peace that comes from knowing – and believing – that the Lord is always near? How can we help but rejoice!

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