



Christ in Our Neighborhood



CYCLE A

Prayer

O God, Loving Father and Lord of all,
You see how Your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity. Enable us to attain the joys of so great a feast in our celebration, worship, and glad rejoicing. Amen!

Commentary

2nd Reading: James 5:7-10

James tells us in the second reading that as we hope for Christ's Second Coming in glory, we must be patient and steadfast in our faith. It takes practice to develop patience.

James uses the example of a farmer to illustrate patience and trust. Between planting and harvesting, there is an interval over which the farmer has little power. It is the sun and the rain that God's creativity makes manifest. In the same way, between our birth and death, we must rely on the grace of light and love that will bring us to maturity.

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 35:1-6

In our reading, Isaiah describes how God plans to make the world better for all who have faith in Him.

Beginning with the earth, God would turn the land into gardens bursting with vegetation and beauty. Then, those who are weak, sick, blind, and lame would be freed of their afflictions. Finally, God's people would be transformed and crowned with everlasting joy.

Isaiah proclaims that God would grant divine recompense through His coming into the world in order to save us. When the Lord comes, the faithful will be greeted; joy and gladness and sorrow and mourning will flee.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus will return again in glory. We call this the Second Coming. The joy and gladness referred to by Isaiah will be fully realized when the Lord takes us to Himself in heaven. However, the Lord meets us every day and our hearts should rejoice and be glad even now.

3rd Sunday of Advent

The spirit of patience reaps great rewards: God's grace is revealed through His Anointed One, the coming Messiah who saves His people. So, be patient! And take courage, James says, because the coming of the Lord is near.

Question

How can my virtue of patience be guided by knowing and thinking about the Lord coming into this world to save us and give us grace each day?

Question

On this "Joyful Sunday" how can we move beyond distress and appreciate the joy of salvation given through Jesus Christ?

Bring someone back to the Church by inviting him or her to break open the Word of God through *Christ in Our Neighborhood*.

How will you share Christ in your own neighborhood this week and grow closer to God?

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Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist is in prison and seems to be impatient. He is wondering whether Jesus is the Messiah, "Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?"

Jesus doesn't directly respond to John. He urges John's messengers, "Go tell him what you hear and see, the blind regain their sight, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."

Jesus gave evidence through His works (rather than words) that He was the one to come. The result would be a complete transformation and restoration of humanity in a community of love.

This Third Sunday of Advent is *Gaudete* Sunday, a day of rejoicing. It is a time to rejoice in who God is.

We might reflect on what Pope Francis stated in the opening paragraph of

"*Evangelii Gaudium*." "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept His offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is born anew."

Question

How do I allow the joy of salvation to overcome inner emptiness in my life?

This Week's Task

The holidays can be joyful. They can also be emotionally hard on those who struggle with the winter cold, endure the emptiness due to the death of a loved one, or feel alone after a divorce or estrangement from family.

On this *Gaudete* Sunday, take time to reach out to a friend or family member, or even a person on the street, and bring some joy into their life.

Be creative in spreading joy this week!

Group Prayer

The group offers the following by Henry Alvord (1810-1871):

We walk by faith
and not by sight;
No gracious words we hear
of him who spoke
As none e'er spoke,
but we believe him near.

Help then, O Lord,
our unbelief,
And may our faith abound;
to call on you when you are near,
And seek where you are found.

That when our life of faith is done
in realms of clearer light
We may behold you as you are
In full and endless sight.

Continue with Psalm 146

Psalm

Lord, come and save us.

The LORD God keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

R. Lord, come and save us.

The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.
The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

R. Lord, come and save us.

The fatherless and the widow he sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations.

R. Lord, come and save us.

Conclude with an Our Father