



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Loving Father, As we continue in this Advent season, fill us with the joyful virtue of hope. Help us to long for your Son Jesus with love in our hearts. Let us remain faithful until He returns in glory. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

When the founders of the United States made a declaration that they were free and independent, they were in the midst of war. They had no evidence that after their declaration they would be around to see a free nation realized. Nevertheless, they boldly declared that they were free.

When the Prophet Isaiah “declared” a day of vindication from God and a year of favor from the Lord, he proclaimed what would one day be. He had not seen nor witnessed this promised favor of God, but he believed and boldly professed it.

As citizens of the U.S., we celebrate the boldness of our nations first citizens. Likewise, as Christians, we remember the prophetic voices of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and even John the Baptist who testified to who was yet to come.

Jesus is that anointed one who would come to “bring glad tidings to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners. In other words, He would be our savior.

There is a boldness in those who place their faith in what is to come. As we long for the Lord’s return in glory, may we be just as bold in our proclamation.

Question

Are you bold in your proclamation of the Lord?

Commentary

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Our season of Advent takes a turn this weekend with new colors, brighter lights, and the word, “Rejoice!”

The Third Sunday of Advent is also called Gaudete (*Rejoice*) Sunday.

3rd Sunday of Advent

Our Second Reading gives this Sunday its title: “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks.”

These words bring us comfort as the shortest day and the longest night approaches. The day after the Winter Solstice (December 21/22), our days become a little brighter.

This is a time when we light the third candle of the Advent wreath. It is symbolic of the hope for brighter things to come as we now turn our attention to Christ, born of Mary, at Christmas. He is the light of the world, the North Star, who guides us out of our darkness. He is truly our cause for rejoicing!

Question

How will you make the approaching season of Christmas a time for rejoicing in Jesus, the Light of the world?

Are you interested in receiving free commentaries for your own personal or group reflections during this 4 week series and throughout the year?

**Visit
dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood**

Commentary

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

In their darkest moment, the crowds in John's Gospel were disoriented. In their confusion they reached out to John the Baptist and hoped that he would be their light in the darkness.

John quickly tells them that he is not. Rather, he is one who testifies to the Light. John gives the crowd hope and reason to rejoice as he says "there is one who is coming after me."

In our darkest moments, we might grasp at straws to find help. We might look for other saviors or self-help guides to get us out of our messes.

However, there is only one true light who will dispel our darkness. The challenge for us as Christians is to reach out to Christ, the light of the world.

Not to be confused with other "messiahs," Jesus is the true Christ and reason for Gaudete Sunday - our time to rejoice!

Question

In your time of darkness, to whom do you turn for help?

This Week's Task

In a few weeks, we will begin a new calendar year. Generally, people make New Year's resolutions. Make a list of resolutions here. Place on the top of your list the following:

1st Resolution: I will let Christ be my light and guide.

2nd Resolution: _____

3rd Resolution: _____

4th Resolution: _____

Group Prayer

Pray or sing this traditional Advent hymn:

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

The prayer continues with Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1

Psalm

Response: My soul rejoices in my God.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

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.

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

Conclude with an Our Father