

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Make Us an Image of Justice

Loving Father,
in your goodness
you have made us in your image.
Make us an image
of your justice, mercy, and peace
that, like John,

we might point the way to you.
Bring all the world into the light of your love
that we might see your glory forever.
Let our rejoicing now be the seed
of the joy that is to come.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 12, 2021

Rejoice!



Today's readings: Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Philemon 4:4–7; Isaiah 12:2–3, 4, 5–6; Luke 3:10–18. The nearness of Jesus, our salvation, is now made present and brings with it a call to rejoice.

In today's Gospel, the people ask John the Baptist what they are to do. His answer is always the same: act with justice. The Jewish people, then and now, await a messiah who will bring about perfect justice. John speaks to people waiting and watching, yesterday and today: act with justice.

Often, a need to change is not associated with "good news." Yet the people feel something in their hearts when they are with John. They experience his preaching as good news even when it is challenging. They desire the kingdom

of God and see that the world is not there yet. They are called to change. John also makes clear that they themselves do not have to do everything. That is also a hopeful message. Each person does their part, and their part is enough. It is God who brings about the kingdom of justice and peace, fulfilling the work begun in creation.

John speaks of a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. Fire can purify metal, and its heat in boiling water sterilizes objects. While preparing for Jesus' coming, we might ask the Spirit to purify our hearts so that we seek to act justly. What could you do this week to live the value of justice? What in you must be taken away to live this more perfectly?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 13

St. Lucy

St. Lucy was an early Christian martyr who died during the Roman persecutions. Accounts say that her eyes were gouged out when she was martyred, and therefore she is the patron of those with eye illnesses. Her feast day is often celebrated with candles because, in the Northern Hemisphere, the day is among the shortest days of the year. St. Lucy is one of eight women included in the canon of the Mass. *Today's readings: Numbers 24:2–7, 15–17a; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6, 7bc, 8–9; Matthew 21:23–27.*

Tuesday, December 14

St. John of the Cross

St. John of the Cross, a doctor of the Church, was a priest, mystic, and writer who lived in Spain in the sixteenth century. One of his best-known works is *The Dark Night of the Soul*. He was a close collaborator of St. Teresa of Avila. *Today's readings: Zephaniah 3:1–2, 9–13; Psalm 34:2–3, 6–7, 17–18, 19, 23; Matthew 21:28–32.*

Wednesday, December 15

Signs

“The blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.” Often we wish for miraculous signs that will help us know where to go. But these actions of Jesus are that and more. The hope of the people of Israel was in a person who would bring about a new kingdom in which the sufferings of this world would be left behind. These particular signs are a message to John the Baptist: Jesus is the long-awaited messiah. *Today's readings: Isaiah 45:6b–8, 18, 21c–25; Psalm 85:9ab, 10, 11–12, 13–14; Luke 7:18b–23.*

Thursday, December 16

God's Faithfulness

God's love will be constant, the covenant of peace unbroken, even if the mountains fall. While people often disappoint us when commitments are not kept, God's promise is not reliant on our faithfulness but on the faithfulness of God. We know that God is a keeper of promises: promises kept to Sarah, to Hannah, to Elizabeth, to Mary, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to John the Baptist. We can trust that even in our darkest moments God is faithful to us as well. *Today's readings: Isaiah 54:1–10; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5–6, 11–12a, 13b; Luke 7:24–30.*

Friday, December 17

O Wisdom

Within the Church's liturgical tradition, the “O” Antiphons are prayed the seven days before Christmas. Each of these antiphons presents a title for the messiah. Many are familiar with these seven titles because they begin the verses of the hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” The first antiphon, which is used on December 17, is O Wisdom. You might sing this verse of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” or you might pray Evening Prayer. You can find resources online, including apps to assist you, in praying the Liturgy of the Hours. *Today's readings: Genesis 49:2, 8–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 3–4ab, 7–8, 17; Matthew 1:1–17.*

Saturday, December 18

The Dream of St. Joseph

St. Joseph was a righteous man, meaning he followed the law of Moses, and according to the Law, Mary would be put to death. St. Joseph also must have been a man of great compassion who was accustomed to God's voice. When the angel came to him in a dream, he immediately believed. Moreover, he immediately acted. Today, spend time in silent prayer so that, like Joseph, you may know your call when it comes and answer with your whole heart. *Today's readings: Jeremiah 23:5–8; Psalm 72:1–2, 12–13, 18–19; Matthew 1:18–25.*

