



Advent 2021, Week 3 Reflection

Gratitude and Joy

Welcome to the Third Week of the Advent audio retreat, presented by Jesuit Connections and Charis Ministries. Now that we've contemplated "Peace in Suffering," let's pause and breathe deeply as we turn our attention to this week's theme: "Gratitude and Joy..."

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally referred to as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is the Latin word meaning "rejoice." On this Sunday we recognize the **joy** brought into our lives through the coming of Jesus, as the period of waiting and preparations is almost over; the great **joy** of welcoming and celebrating the Lord's Incarnation is just days away.



Advent Of Christmas...Stars on Display at a Village Shop In Kerala... by -Reji is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

In the first reading, we hear the prophet Zephaniah deliver a message of both warning and comfort. Zephaniah tells the people to shout for **joy** and be glad because the Lord is removing all judgment against them. In the second reading, we hear Saint Paul calling the people to rejoice as he repeats the emphasis on the **joy** that is ours in Jesus. The message from Saint Paul to the Philippians is this: Whatever our circumstances are, nothing can change the fact that we are loved by God and have reason to rejoice because we have been created in the love of God in Christ. This reading calls us to be aware of the fact that we are about to celebrate God becoming one of us to illustrate just how much God loves us. In today's Gospel reading, we hear how John the Baptist is about to deliver the message of great **joy**. Both John the Baptist and Jesus will call the people to be **joyful**—they are to continue seeking to improve their lives but should also be **joyful** and grateful for what they have. Christians are called to live lives of gratitude. Oftentimes, people can get caught up in wants and can forget to be grateful for what they already have. We are certainly called to improve our lives, but by overemphasizing things that are external, we can forget the **joy** that lives within us.

I know in life I sometimes forget or fail to recognize those **joyful** moments or experiences that are often all around us. At times I become consumed with whatever I am doing at the moment and let the busyness of life take over. The holiday season can exacerbate our sense of busyness; I need to go to this party, visit this person, buy this gift, etc. Our challenge is to not make this season a frenzied time, but rather a time of **joyful** anticipation and preparation for God who comes to dwell among us and changes our lives with the gift of salvation.

We can learn a lot from watching little children when they are smiling and laughing. Sometimes just being around other people or being in the midst of God's creation has the ability to bring **joy**. **Joy** is something that resides within each human being and is made known to the outside world through smiles or laughter. Regardless of age, when you see people smiling and laughing, perhaps that is God in the **joy** residing within each person.

I am reminded of a quote from Joseph Campbell, who once stated, "find a place inside where there is **joy**, and the **joy** will burn out the pain."

This week's reflection on "Gratitude and Joy" was written by Chris Miller, President of JFAN, the Jesuit Friends and Alumni Network. Chris lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Thanks for taking the time to reflect on "Gratitude and Joy" with us. Join us next week for the final installment of our Advent audio retreat, as we ponder "The Loving Gaze."

Reflection questions:

- *What and/or who brings me joy?*
- *Even in times of grief and despair, are there times where you or others are able to feel joy?*
- *How can you continue to make yourself ready to receive Jesus in your life as we draw closer to our Lord's birth, so that in a week and a half we can truly believe, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!"?*