



Third Sunday of Advent [Gaudete]

† Sunday 16th December 2018

Cycle of Prayer: Migrants, refugees and human life

Keynote: The coming Lord is near! A time for great joy!

Prophet Zephaniah 3: 14-18a

This text seems to be in the form of a hymn of rejoicing, possibly marking deliverance from a siege or a great triumphant procession of thanksgiving for a victory gained. *‘Shout for joy, daughters of Zion, Israel, shout aloud!’* The reason for the joy is *‘The Lord has repealed your sentence... he has driven your enemies away. The Lord... is in your midst; you have no more evil to fear’*. The Church in choosing this reading would have us understand that whatever our situation in life *‘The Lord God is in our midst... he will exult with joy over you, he will renew you with his love’*. Advent is a good time for each of us to seek renewal in God’s love, and as a Christian community to rejoice at the coming of God.

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah [12:2-6] – Sing and shout for joy – God is in your midst

Letter of Paul to the Philippians 4: 4-7

‘The Lord is very near’ says Paul, *‘there is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving’*. Paul is writing this from prison. Things hadn’t been going too well for him, but his only concern is for the Christian communities he has left behind in Asia Minor. He urges the Christian community to set an example of love: *‘What I want is your happiness’*, he says *‘Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: The Lord is very near’*. We who hear these words today are also included when Paul writes: *‘I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord’*.

Gospel according to Luke 3: 10-18

Frequently throughout his gospel narrative, Luke frequently refers to the outsiders, the soldiers of the Roman occupying power; the much hated tax gatherers and the poor. For it is they who best respond to the call to repentance. The people asked John the Baptist: *‘What must we do, then?’* he says, *‘If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same’*. Hardly talk of revolution, but for the outsider, the refugee, the slave or the oppressed this was gospel – good news – indeed! No wonder as Luke writes *‘A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people’*. But John openly proclaims he is not the Christ, *‘someone is coming who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire’*. In order to be ready to welcome Christ, we may need to be open – open to the possibility of finding goodness outside the more obvious and acceptable ways of life. It is to *‘the outsiders’* such as these that John the Baptist announces the Good News, and *‘a feeling of expectancy grows among the people’*. The Church in Advent does well to rediscover that feeling of expectancy and to re-dedicate itself to the care of the poor and downtrodden, and to the proclamation of the Good News that is true Gospel.

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