

Week 3: Joy



Opening prayer

As we light the third candle on our Advent wreath, we celebrate the good news of great joy for all people brought by the coming of Christ. Lord, help us share your joy.

(Light the first, second and third candle on your Advent wreath.)

Scripture

The crowds asked John the Baptist, “What then shall we do?” And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunic is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” Tax collectors also came to be baptised and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorised to do.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, “I baptise you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. (Luke 3:1-18)

Reflection

John the Baptist places a demanding expectation before the people of his day. His words are direct, clear and explicit: share what you have, be honest, do not oppress people.

When a missile was shot down over the roof of her apartment in Kherson, Irini knew it was time to get her family of four to safety. They were relieved to find a new house, away from the front line but knew they would struggle to survive the harsh Ukrainian winter without money or fuel

Thankfully, determined local experts at Caritas were able to help the family with fuel so that they would have heat during the worst months. The family gathers in just two rooms to help everyone keep warm in the freezing conditions.

Despite the challenges, Irini shows the kind of open-handed generosity that John the Baptist speaks of today, sharing her firewood with others who were not able procure any themselves. She says: "For me, warmth means family, peace, friendship, support."

Today is Gaudete Sunday (Latin for 'rejoice') and as we dwell on the words of John the Baptist and the example of Irini, we are reminded of the joy that is offered to us in living out the gospel, in the concrete actions of sharing and loving that bring new life to the world and to us.

For discussion

- When has joy come to you in unexpected ways? How have you shared joy with others?
- What connections can you make between joy and justice?
- How can we sing a song of joy, even in difficult times?

Closing prayer

In times of despair,
we seek comfort in your presence.
We wait in hope for you.
Come, Lord, source of joy.

Move us to be good news in our world
and to stand alongside
our sisters and brothers in need.
Come, Lord, source of joy.

Lead us in your ways
as together we make a change
so all people may rejoice and be glad.
Come, Lord, source of joy.

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