



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Year C

Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

Gathering

(A bible open to this week's gospel, three unlit purple candles and one rose-colored candle, surrounded by seasonal greens, are arranged on a table in the gathering place.)

This week's liturgy draws us to rejoice and to live from gratitude over the Lord who has come, is in our midst and will come again. We speak readily of Advent as a time of waiting, but what is the spirit that informs our waiting, if not a spirit of prayer. How prayerful were you this past week?

Prayer

(The candles are lit. The leader calls the community to silent attention to the Lord in their midst. A brief instrumental selection is played. When the music is complete, the community pauses for yet another moment of quiet.)

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading.)

Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

We stand in a great tradition. Zephaniah tells his people rejoice because God is “in [their] midst.” For his part, John, the Baptizer, speaks to the people of his time in anticipation of the coming messiah. Now for our sakes, this week’s liturgy offers us these scriptures to draw us into the great rejoicing over the Lord who has come, is present and will come again.

So, *what should we do?* The crowds ask John this question. Tax collectors ask him the same question. Even soldiers ask him, “What should we do?” John answers in a way that was appropriate for his time and place. Share, live justly, live in right relationship – this was his theme. What does this mean for us today? What should we do?

There is a happy coincidence between John’s call to share one’s extra cloak with someone in need and the winter clothing drives that are so common in our parishes at this time of year. In the spirit of this season we are called to share above all from gratitude rather than from some sense of obligation.

The sharing of gifts is a hallmark of Christmas. We share not in the first place because good consumers buy stuff to keep the economy going. We share gifts in celebration of God’s own great Gift. For us as a people of faith, this is *our joy of giving*.

“What should we do?” Live from joy. *Baptized with the Holy Spirit*, our joy springs from gratitude. Joy shares itself. When we share, when we live

justly, when we live in right relationship – this is how we *preach good news to the people*.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Besides the things you give each other, what do you want for Christmas this year for your family?
- ◆ How prepared are you this year to receive the Gift of Christmas?
- ◆ What does it mean to you to know that God rejoices over us/you with gladness?

HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?” “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Go through your closets to find clothing you have not worn this past year. Prepare it for donation to a shelter in your area.
- ◆ Participate generously in your parish Christmas outreach to children and families in need.
- ◆ Invite an alienated family member to be part of your Christmas celebration this year.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five

minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.

Following this sharing, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader:

God is indeed my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation

All:

Cry out with joy and gladness, for among you is the
Holy One of Israel.

Leader:

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

All:

Cry out with joy and gladness, for among you is the
Holy One of Israel.

Leader:

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;
let this be known throughout all the earth.
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

All:

Cry out with joy and gladness, for among you is the
Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

(Members join hands and pray the Lord's Prayer. The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)