

WSC REFLECTION GUIDE

Readings: Zephaniah 3: 14 -18 Psalm 78:3 – 4, 23 - 25, 54 Philippians 4: 4-7 Luke 3: 10-18	3 rd Sunday of Advent December 13, 2009
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Word:	Redemption is at hand for those who are vigilant for the coming of Jesus, the Son of Man.
Theme:	We are vigilant fro the coming of Jesus when we joyfully show kindness to all. [Kindness]
Promise:	<i>“The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:7)</i>

Reflection:

The theme of the readings of the third Sunday rings out loud and clear – the message is of hope and rejoicing. The dawn is breaking and the Lord is near, closer to us than we realize. Christ’s nearness touches all our lives for he is now working with us and in us. The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called in “Gaudete” Sunday, meaning “Joyous” Sunday. It marks the midpoint of Advent, vestments are a lighter color and the rose candle on the advent wreath is lit.

In the first reading, the book of Zephaniah speaks to Israel about the darkening clouds of judgment looming over them, and the shaft of sunlight emerging as he tells them about the coming joy of deliverance, **“Shout for joy, O daughter Zion. The Lord is in your midst, a mighty Savior... He will renew you,”** (Zep 3: 14-15). Similarly the Lord will renew us in His love. That is a magnificent promise of spiritual renewal and rejuvenation whatever our age or condition right now. Rejoice says St. Paul to us. Indeed, we have the good reason to do so...**“the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”** Phil 4: 4-7). What a powerful promise and spiritual security to have the very peace of God within us no matter what is happening around us.

In the Gospel of Luke, John the Baptist’s words show us the way to the profound joy that is at the spiritual heart of the season. He demands specific responses to prepare for the coming of the Messiah into our heart: (1) share what you have with the needy, (2) whatever you do, do it well and practice right living, (3) repent and reform yourself. Like the prophets of old, he exhorts everyone to **“turn away from sin to avoid the punishment, turn to God and reap the blessings.”** It is a message for all time and occasions, but he pronounces it with particular urgency – for he was preparing for the coming of the Messiah. He continues warn

of impending judgment comparing those who refuse to live for God to chaff, those who repent and reform their lives to the nourishing grain itself. Those who refuse to be used by God will be discarded because they have no value in furthering God's work, those who repent and undergo conversion, however, are of great value in God's eyes because they are beginning a new life of productive service for Him.

Reality check!! Do we really feel the joy of this season? Sadness is so much part of our lives that we are inclined to ask: What have I got to rejoice about? I continue to struggle financially, I am, a victim of the recent typhoon, I have lost a loved ones, and/or property, I am unwell, or there is sickness in the family. If times were better it might be easier to feel joyful. The dreadful circumstances in the world gives a little cause of rejoicing. As we continue on this earthly journey we experience the bitter sweet mixture of joy and sorrow. If only we can look into our hearts and know that there is great reason to rejoice.

This call to rejoice and lift our heart challenges us to do some soul searching. How might we attain the spiritual joy that should be rightfully ours in the face of our current problems? We ask the same question that John was asked by the people. His reply is uncompromising. The secret is in committing ourselves totally to God's plan for in God's way lies the way of peace.

Happiness comes from doing good, being honorable, having concern for those in need, and kindness to all. We can help make life more pleasant for others by showing our appreciation with a smile, people in little ways, a warm smile, a friendly remark, or by being compassionate, tolerant, and overlooking minor irritants. Yes, bringing joy to others is an apostolic work.

The joy of Gaudette Sunday does not come from stressing ourselves 'keeping up with the Juan de la Cruzes', nor in trying to match or better the celebrations and gift-giving of our neighbors. Advent is not a so much a time for ostentatious display of Christmas decorations, even of hanging up Christmas lanterns or sending greeting cards. These are good, but they are not essential to the celebration, or message of Christmas. They are merely outward signs of a much deeper and more important reality: our desire to meet the Lord, our preparation to receive him in our lives, both as individuals and as a community. The challenge to recognize him and the duty to welcome him, the invitation extended is to be vigilant and to recognize and welcome him in the coming of the Son of man.

In Christian life, virtue is linked directly with the action of the Holy Spirit within us, including His 'Gifts' and 'Fruits' (cf CFC 979- 84) To get ready for the coming of the Son of Man, we lay bare and cleanse our inner spirit through the sacrament of confession and in fostering Christian peace where we live and work and by doing our share in bringing pleasure and affection to those around us. We must look to Mother Mary who knew such contradictions when exhausted after such long journey, could not find room at the inn for the birth of her Son. The situation which

would distress most of us did not cause her to lose her joy when she gave birth to her son.

In a few days it will be Christmas, God wants us to be joyful like the shepherds, like the wise men, like Mary and Joseph. Certainly, God the Father gave us his best gift, Jesus, His beloved Son. We have much reason to rejoice.

Prayer

Almighty Father, as we await the coming of your Son Jesus, the source of all true happiness, allow us to feel the joy of his presence in every moment of our journey through life. Let the light of your glorious Son clarify the meaning of our lives and show us the way to transform us into living reflections of your kindness and love, this we pray in Jesus name.

Suggested Personal Reflection Guide:

1. Are you joyfully prepared to welcome the coming of Jesus? Give your plans as signs of your readiness.
2. What changes can you make in sharing what you have and in doing your work honestly and well?

Next Week's Daily Mass Reading Guide:

December 14, 2009 (Mon):	Num 24:2-7,15-17a; Ps 25:4-9;Mt 21:23-27
December 15, 2009 (Tue):	Zep 3:1-2,9-13; Ps 34:2-3,6-7,17-18,19-23; Mat 21:28-32
December 16, 2009 (Wed):	Is 45:6-8, 18, 21-25; Ps 85:9-14; Lk 7:18-23
December 17, 2009 (Thur):	Gen 49:2, 8-10; Ps 72:1-4, 7-18, 17; Mt 1:1-17
December 18, 2009 (Fri):	Jer 23:5-8; Ps 72:1-2,12-13,18-19; Mt 1:18-25
December 19, 2009 (Sat):	Jud 13:2-7, 24-25; Ps 71:3-6, 16-17; Lk 1:5-25

“Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ. Read your Bible daily!”