

Sunday December 12, 2021

## **Third Week of Advent**

### **Parishioner Reflection**

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This week we celebrate the beginning of the third week of Advent, and the readings for today focus on the theme of rejoicing, which is the expression of joy.

Many are struggling these days. The pandemic has taken quite a toll. Joy can seem elusive when we are weighed down with suffering and sorrow. I would like to share some of my thoughts on five practical steps we can take to regain joy.

#### **Joy in the Word**

Turn to God's Word and see what God Himself has to say about joy. Joy and rejoicing are mentioned over a hundred times in the Bible. We find several examples in the readings for today:

...Rejoice and exult with all your heart... [Zephaniah 3:14]

...he will rejoice over you with gladness... [Zephaniah 3:17]

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. [Isaiah 12:3]

Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

[Isaiah 12:6]

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. [Philippians 4:4]

#### **Joy in God's Presence**

Spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament. Let Jesus who is the source of all joy shine on you through the Blessed Sacrament. Even if you don't have the opportunity to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, know that Jesus is with you in all things. He never leaves your side, not even for an instant.

Here is a little tip I gave my daughter when she was trying to establish a relationship with Jesus. Imagine (or do it for real) that you are in a coffee shop enjoying your favorite beverage. Imagine that Jesus is sitting at the table with you enjoying His favorite beverage. In the depths of your heart, talk to Him like you would talk to your best friend. Tell Him about the challenges you are facing and the things you are looking forward to. Listen in your heart for His response, the challenges He is facing, and the things He is looking forward to. This way you can start to build a relationship with Jesus. We find joy in healthy relationships. Sometimes, there will be pain and sorrow in our lives, but sharing them with a close friend can make them easier to bear. Jesus wants to be our best friend, if we let Him.

#### **Joy is the Fruit of Peace**

If joy eludes us, a practical step we can take to regain it is to ask Jesus for peace. Jesus promised us peace, not as the world gives, but as He alone can give. Peace is ours for the asking. It is His promise to us. Once we have true peace in our hearts and souls, joy will follow.

### **Joy in Being**

Today's world puts a lot of pressure on finding worth in what we do rather than who we are. Our true worth goes far beyond anything we do in life. Our true worth is that we are each God's unique creation. There is no one like us, nor will there ever be. God deeply loves each one of us for who we are, the unique creation He made us to be, and nothing we do or fail to do will ever change that. If we stop putting pressure on ourselves to "do" and allow ourselves to "be", we can discover joy in our "being".

### **Joy in Letting Go**

We need to let go of our past mistakes. The sacrament of reconciliation can help if there is something troubling our conscience. We need to forgive others. We need to forgive ourselves. We need to accept forgiveness when it is offered to us. We need to stop worrying about the future and trust God more. When we let go of all the negative things that are crowding our minds, it just might make room for joy to enter in.