

PRAY AND REFLECT: ADVENT



WEEK THREE

JOY



*May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.
May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on
the love that has been given to you.*

St Teresa of Avila



The Lord comes that we might find him in this world of ours.

Pope Francis *Laudato Si'*

INTRODUCTION

In the first book of Kings God speaks to the prophet Elijah but His voice is not to be found in the power of the hurricane, in the roar of the earthquake or in the heat of the fire. Instead, God reveals Himself in the gentle whisper of the breeze. It is here, in the quiet, that God speaks to Elijah in a small, still voice. Elijah meets God in the silence and this is where we too can encounter Him in moments of quiet contemplation.

Anne O'Connor

Advent brings us closer to Christ who is with us. We wait with joy for the Lord, the hope of the world. We are called to reach out with love to our sisters and brothers in need, sharing our hope for a world transformed.

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Be happy at all times, pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because that is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus. May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

pause for silent prayer and reflection

POEM: BASED ON PSALM 23

This I know: My life is in your hands. I have nothing to fear. I stop, breathe, listen.	In peril, I remember: Death's dark vale holds no menace. I lean into You; Your eternal presence comforts me. I am held tenderly.
Beneath the whirl of what is is a deep down quiet place. You beckon me to tarry there. This is the place where unnamed hungers are fed, the place of clear water, refreshment.	In the midst of all that troubles, that threatens and diminishes, You set abundance before me. You lift my head; my vision clears. The blessing cup overflows.
My senses stilled, I drink deeply, at home in timeless territory.	This I know: You are my home and my hope, my strength and my solace, and so shall You ever be.

Carla A. Grosch-Miller *Psalms Redux: Poems and Prayers*

PRAYER

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

Response: Come, Lord, source of joy.

Move us to be good news in our world and to stand alongside
our sisters and brothers in need.

Response: Come, Lord, source of joy.

Lead us in your ways as together we make a change so all people
may rejoice and be glad.

Response: Come, Lord, source of joy.

CAFOD Advent prayers

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH *(we say together)*

Dear Father, pour out your Holy Spirit on our parish
that we may grow ever closer to you,
showing your loving kindness to others.

May our parish be a place of welcome for all,
offering companionship to the lonely,
shelter to the stranger
and comfort to the broken.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Saviour.
Amen.

Anne O'Connor

A BLESSING *(we say together)*

The blessing of the God
present from the dawning of creation
be with us,

The blessing of the Son
who encircles us in the protection of his presence
be with us,

And the blessing of the Spirit
who invites us to new adventures in faith be with us,
yesterday, today and forever.

Clare McBeath, *Roots for Churches, 2008*

AN ADVENT LITANY

At this season of watching and waiting, this season of repentance,
this season of joyful expectation, as we prepare for the coming of Christ
our Lord, let us pray for:

all who are
 searching
 vulnerable
 suffering
 poor
 in need

all who feel
 rejected
 unloved
 despised
 cast down
 cast out

all who are denied
 food
 shelter
 education
 freedom
 work
 respect

all who are
 fearful
 oppressed
 silenced
 tortured
 ignored
 alone

that they may experience the light, love, joy and hope of Christ
this Advent.
Amen.

Source unknown

pause for silent prayer and reflection

MUSIC: *Any Other Name* Thomas Newman

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

A man came sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

pause for silent prayer and reflection

SEEKING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST *(we say together)*

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things
look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness,
yet seeking the light.
To you we say, 'Come Lord Jesus!'

Henri Nouwen

MUSIC: *Bless the Lord, my Soul*

Bless the Lord, my soul,
and bless God's holy name.
Bless the Lord, my soul,
who leads me into life.

Jacques Berthier, Taizé

ADVENT, A SEASON OF SPECIAL GRACE

What joy is ours when we find Jesus,
the sunshine of the universe.
Heaven and earth kiss in Jesus.
Jesus is God's smile on the earth.

The Child that lies in the manger,
helpless and abandoned to the love of His creatures,
dependent entirely upon them
to be fed, clothed, and sustained,
remains the Creator and Ruler of the universe.

He wills to be helpless
that we may take Him into our care.
He has embraced our poverty
in order to give us his riches.

Thomas Merton *Seasons of Celebration*

pause for silent prayer and reflection

CHOOSE JOY

Joy is essential to the spiritual life. Whatever we may think of or say about God, when we are not joyful, our thoughts and words cannot bear fruit. Jesus reveals to us God's love so that his joy may become ours and that our joy may become complete.

Joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing — sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death — can take that love away.

Joy is not the same as happiness. We can be unhappy about many things, but joy can still be there because it comes from the knowledge of God's love for us.

Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day. It is a choice based on the knowledge that we belong to God and have found in God our refuge and our safety and that nothing, not even death, can take God away from us.

Henri Nouwen

pause for silent prayer and reflection

JOY

Joy has a way of meeting us in the most complicated places — it comes as a strange grace that enables us to stand in the midst of sorrow or pain or chaos, to acknowledge and name them while refusing to let them have the final word.

Joy asks us to trust that something is at work in a way we cannot see clearly but in which we are asked to participate, that we might be part of how it arrives.

Practicing joy involves asking for it, preparing a place for it, praying to be open to it so we can recognize it when it appears.

Jan Richardson *The Sanctuary between Us*

www.janrichardson.com

HOW JOY WORKS: A BLESSING

You could not stop it
if you tried —

how this blessing
begins to sing
every time it sees your face,
how it turns itself in wonder
merely at the mention
of your name

It is simply how joy works,
going out to you
when you least expect,
running up to meet you
when you had not thought to ask.



Jan Richardson *The Sanctuary between Us*

www.janrichardson.com

pause for silent prayer and reflection

MUSIC: *For the Beauty of the Earth*

John Rutter