

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



## Lasting Joy

Loving God,  
all that was broken, you bind up,  
all that was lost, you restore.  
We rejoice that you have come to save us,  
but sometimes we weaken and lose heart.  
When we grow tired, give us your strength.  
When we grow fearful and uncertain,  
give us your resolve.

When we forget you in times of pain  
and sorrow,  
inspire us anew with your love  
and consolation.  
Heal all that ails our hearts  
so that we may walk with unwavering faith  
into the everlasting joy of your kingdom.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Sunday, December 15, 2019**

**Come What May**



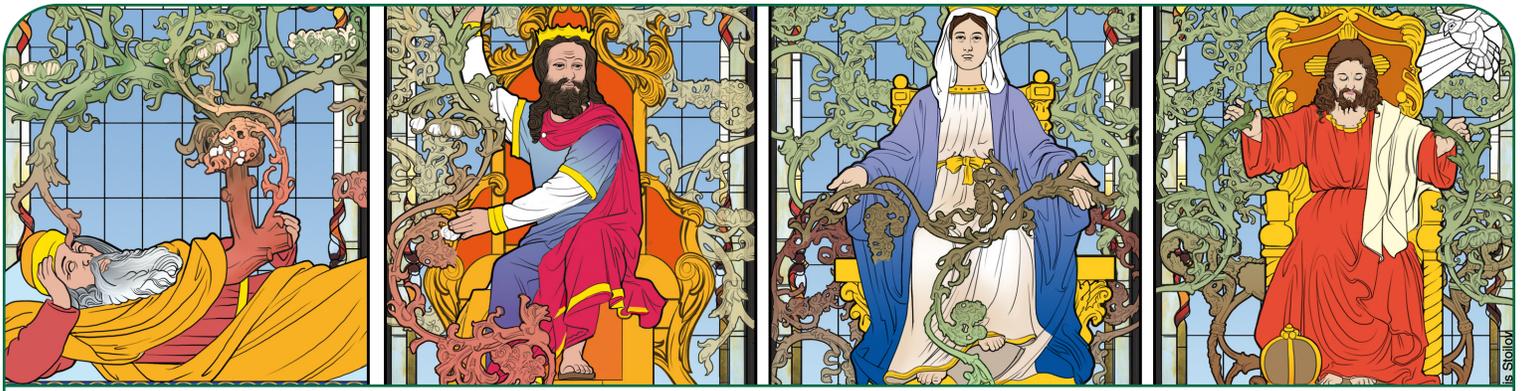
*Today's Readings: Isaiah 35:1–6a, 10; Psalm 146:6–7, 8–9, 9–10; James 5:7–10; Matthew 11:2–11.* On this Gaudete Sunday, we rejoice that we will soon celebrate the Incarnation. Our excitement increases as schools let out, Christmas parties begin, and stores ramp up their bargains. With so much going on, the joy of Christmas might feel effortless, but our readings remind us that true joy comes from commitment and perseverance.

St. James urges us to be patient and steadfast in our faith despite whatever unkindness or injustice assails us. It is easy to be joyful when things are going well; it shows true faith to remain uplifted when life gets hard. The prophet Isaiah knows this, too. He prophesied that God would bring

back those who were forced to leave their homes because of war. Any who wish to share in this glorious future, however, must remain strong and steadfast for the long journey home.

For John the Baptist and others, remaining steadfast in joyful hope meant accepting that God's plan of salvation was unfolding differently than they thought it would. Although Jesus revealed God's compassion, in other ways he was not the messiah they wanted. Some people were even offended by Jesus. It took effort for people to set aside their expectations and receive Jesus with joy.

This Sunday we ask ourselves what could steal our joy away, and we recommit ourselves to being strong, patient, and steadfast in faith, come what may.



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, December 16 Speaking Truly

Balaam, who was not an Israelite, was called upon by a foreign leader to curse God's people. Instead, Balaam blesses Israel. Despite what others want, Balaam obeys God. Despite challenges to his authority, Jesus also persists in proclaiming God's word. Make a list of people who have bravely spoken God's word in the face of opposition. Reflect on what they teach you about staying true to God's word. *Today's Readings: Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9; Matthew 21:23-27.*

### Tuesday, December 17 Jewish Savior

Judah was one of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. Because it was the only tribe to survive a series of foreign attacks, other nations came to refer to the region this tribe inhabited as Judea and to its people as Jews. In his genealogy of Jesus, Matthew is careful to show that Jesus is both Jewish and of the tribe of Judah. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to his people. The Catholic Church's use of the O Antiphons highlights Jesus' Jewish roots. List the O Antiphons and pray with them until Christmas. *Today's Readings: Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17; Matthew 1:1-17.*

### Wednesday, December 18 The Ultimate Salvation

While prophesying that God would save his people, Jeremiah refers to the people's enslavement in Egypt and then to the invasion of Assyria centuries later. During both of these times God's people experienced enslavement and suffering. When the angel appears to Joseph, he announces that Jesus will save all people from the greatest of all enslavements: sin and death. Make a paper chain and hang it on your tree as a reminder of the bondage from which Christ has freed us. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; Matthew 1:18-25.*

### Thursday, December 19 Conceptions

We might not know the story of the wife of Manoah, but Zechariah definitely would have heard of her. He also would know the stories of Sarah and Hannah, two other women in the Old Testament who unexpectedly conceived a child. Despite knowing such stories from his own religious heritage, Zechariah questions Gabriel's prophecy. Help people to celebrate God's gift of life by bringing donations to a local pregnancy center or by volunteering at a shelter for women and children. *Today's Readings: Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Psalm 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25.*

### Friday, December 20 Trust

King Ahaz did not want to ask for a sign because a sign would require his doing something that would probably cost him. God asks Mary to do something that will also significantly change her life, but she obeys. Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of her people, yet Mary entrusts herself to God's extraordinary plan. Surprise someone with an unexpected act of kindness today as a way of sharing God's wondrous goodness. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6; Luke 1:26-38.*

### Saturday, December 21 Leaping for Joy

Our hearts leap for joy at the Incarnation, as we hope they'll leap again for joy at our Lord's return in glory. All of the readings for today remind us that our God in whom we place our hope and trust will work wonders in our lives. Read both options for the First Readings, then compose your own joyful song of praise to God. *Today's Readings: Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Luke 1:39-45.*

