



## BIBLE STUDY THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT YEAR B

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**Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 NABRE**

### Reading I: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

**What are you looking for? Are you looking for Joy?** *“Everyone should be able to experience the joy of being loved by God, the joy of salvation. It is the gift that one cannot keep to oneself, but it is to be shared.* These words of Pope Francis set the theme for the Third Sunday in Advent. On this Sunday, the liturgy gives the word “Joy” prominence. Therefore we, ask the question: Are you looking for joy? Joy is defined as a pleasant emotion or delight. There are many examples of joy in the Bible, but God’s revelation of Himself as Creator and Savior gives us tremendous Joy. Psalm 95:1 expresses this type of joy; *“Come, let us shout with joy to the Lord, the rock of our salvation.”* The source of all joy is God Himself.

The theme of joy is echoed in Isaiah 61: 1-2. The joy comes as a gift of the Holy Spirit who has



**REJOICE IN THE  
LORD ALWAYS!**

anointed the prophet to proclaim good news to the afflicted and comfort Zion. The power of God is necessary for any great work of redemption.

Imagine the joy experienced by the Jews exiled in Babylon when they heard this prophecy of liberation. The coming of the Savior creates an atmosphere of joy that is expressed in the Gospel. The words in this reading are like those in Isaiah 40-50. Christ applied the comforting words of Isaiah 61:1-2 to Himself. (Lk. 4:18-19). Note that the exile and imprisonment of the Jews was like the exile of the human race after the fall of Adam. The joy that Jesus announces about Himself in Isaiah 61:1-2 is the good news of our salvation. We must spread this joy.

In these verses, joy is compared to that of the Year of Jubilee, or favor as prescribed in Lv. 25:8. It was held that every forty-ninth year during which debts were forgiven and slaves were set free. The people and all property belonged to Yahweh and were returned to Him. The joy of the good news was given a nuptial setting. These two images of joy tell us that we must seek the joy that comes from our salvation in Jesus Christ. Are you looking for joy? **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How do you respond to the good news of your salvation?

### WHY DO WE CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE OF CONCEPTION?

The Catholic Catechism teaches:

508 From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. “Full of grace,” Mary is “the most excellent fruit of redemption” (SC 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.

509 Mary is truly “Mother of God” since she is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself.

510 Mary “remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin” (St. Augustine, Sermon 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is “the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38).

511 The Virgin Mary “cooperated through free faith and obedience in human salvation” (LG 56). She uttered her yes “in the name of all human nature” (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 30, 1). By her obedience she became the new Eve, mother of the living.

### Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

**What are you looking for? Are you looking for Joy?** St. Paul found joy in preaching the Gospel of Salvation to the Thessalonians. The Thessalonians, in turn, found joy in living the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The theme for this Sunday comes from this letter to the Thessalonians. St Paul expressed boundless joy because of the durable foundation of Christianity that developed in the church in Thessalonica. The Thessalonians were happy to be living in Christ. Not only did they receive Christ, but they joyfully helped spread the Gospel to other parts of Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 4:10).

In these short verses, St. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians (vv. 16-22) to live in the joy of salvation by: thanking God for the gift of faith; respecting the Spirit while testing His gifts; and avoiding evil of every kind. In this way, the joy of this life would become permanent in the peace and joy of the heavenly kingdom. The God of Joy is faithful! Look for Him and He will give you joy. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can we rejoice in times of trouble and testing?

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

**What Are You Looking For? Are You Looking For Joy?** St. Teresa of Calcutta offers the following concerning joy. *"Let anyone who comes to you go away feeling better and happier. Everyone should see goodness in your face, in your eyes, in your smile. Joy shows from the eyes. It appears when we speak and walk. It cannot be kept closed inside us. It reacts outside. Joy is very infectious."* This statement gives an example of a true witness for Christ. It expresses both the physical and spiritual joy of living a life in Jesus Christ. A joyous heart is more easily made perfect than one that is sad. Spreading the Gospel requires a clean and joyous attitude.

In Year B of the Liturgical Year, the Gospel readings are usually taken from the Gospel of Mark. Since it is the shortest of the Gospels, the readings during this cycle are supplemented by Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John gives several examples of spiritual joy. (vv. 6-8) **1.** John the Baptist was comfortable and happy with his identity. A man sent from God is identified with God, who is the source of all happiness. John the Baptist was sent in the same way in which Jesus was sent. John's role was to prepare the way, that is, to bear witness to Jesus Christ the Light of the World. Both John and Jesus had roles in spreading the Joy of Salvation (Jn. 4:34). **2.** John expressed the joy of knowing his status in life. Though it may have been tempting to do so to gain personal favor and attention, John confessed that he was not the Christ. **3.** John expressed the joy that comes from knowing that you serve God, not man. When the Jewish leadership (not the people) came to him to determine why he baptized and urged people to repentance, (v. 19) he admitted that he was not the Christ, nor the prophet that would inaugurate a new Messianic Age. He knew that he served one God and had one purpose which was to announce the coming of the Messiah. He was neither "a prophet", nor "the prophet." He was happy in that role. **4.** John had the joy of humble service. The Pharisees and Levites seemed to think that John was baptizing and had no authority to do so (vv. 26-27). He told them that his action was only symbolic and there was one among them who was greater than he and greater than the Jewish leadership, as well. John had conceptualized the true dignity of Jesus Christ. He felt that he was not worthy even to be His servant. John found joy in knowing his identity in Jesus Christ. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** Where do you find the most joy on earth? What makes you the happiest? Write a definition of Joy.

Pray About It.

**Monday**

Read Isaiah 61: 1-11. Speak a word of comfort to someone. Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

**Tuesday**

Read Luke 1:14. What can you do to make someone jump for joy?

**Wednesday**

Read Jn. 4:34. Tell someone what God had done in your life.

**Thursday**

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Write down five reasons why you are happy.

**Friday**

Read Jn. 1:6-8. What makes you the happiest?

**DURING ADVENT WE PRAY,  
"THY KINGDOM COME"**

*"Marana tha,"* Come, Lord Jesus!

**2819** "The kingdom of God [is] righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The end-time in which we live is the age of the outpouring of the Spirit. Ever since Pentecost, a decisive battle has been joined between "the flesh" and the Spirit.

*Only a pure soul can boldly say: "Thy kingdom come." One who has heard Paul say, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies," and has purified himself in action, thought, and word will say to God: "Thy kingdom come!"*

**2821** This petition is taken up and granted in the prayer of Jesus which is present and effective in the Eucharist; it bears its fruit in new life in keeping with the Beatitudes.

**Resources:** The Gospel of John The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible , Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition, Ignatius Press San Francisco CA, 2010; pp 162-163; 1 Thessalonians, Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Ignatius Press 2010. San Francisco. CA. 2010 pp 377-378; Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year B, 2018, Bryan Schmisek, Diana Macalintal, Jay Cormier Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 12-15; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

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