

Sunday December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

**Readings**

- Isaiah 61,1-2a, 10-11
- Luke 1 (Canticle)
- 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24
- John 1.6-8, 19-28



**Reflection**

- Besides affirming life and remembering it, celebration is filled with expectations for the future. If the past has the last word, a man would imprison himself more and more the older he became. If the present were the ultimate moment of satisfaction, he would cling to it with hedonistic eagerness, trying to squeeze the last drop of life out of it. But the present holds promise, and reaches out to the horizons of life, and this makes it possible for us to embrace our future as well as our past in the moment of celebration.....

So celebrating means the affirmation of the present, which becomes fully possible only by remembering the past and expecting more to come in the future. But celebrating in this sense very seldom takes place. Nothing is as difficult as really accepting one's own life. More often than not, the present is denied, the past becomes a source of complaints, and the future is looked upon as a reason for despair or apathy.

When Jesus came to redeem mankind, he came to free us from the boundaries of time. Through him it became clear not only that God is with us wherever our presence is in time or space, but also that our past does not have to be denied but can be remembered and forgiven, and that we are still waiting for him to come back and reveal to us what remains unseen.

*Creative Ministry Henri Nouwen*

- **Prayer**
- *Heavenly Father, when celebrating the joy of the season, help me to remember the past, celebrate the present and anticipate Your coming in the future. AMEN*

## Monday, December 18, 2023

## Monday of the Third Week of Advent

- **Readings**

- Jeremiah 23.5-8
- Psalm 72
- Matthew 1. 18-24

- **Reflection**

The heart would make a lousy bulletin board. It is after all, a muscle, an organ in our bodies, not something to write on like paper. When Jeremiah tells us to write on our hearts, we “learned” ones understanding what he means – not the cardiac muscle itself but something else.... Though we can’t locate it exactly.

But, oh, to take this promise literally....what could it mean! That the word of God-God’s promises and commandments- be written literally on the wall of our hearts. And, as our hearts pump blood, the word is taken with that blood to every muscle, every cell, every corpuscle, every nerve, every marrow. That our very bodies might be so infused with the word of God that to say “Know the Lord” would sound as silly as telling someone to breathe! Imagine that!

-Praying the Jesse Tree by Debra Grant

- **Prayer**

*Holy God, infuse us so with your word that we feel your intimacy and power. Write Your Word on our hearts. AMEN*

## Tuesday December 19, 2023

## Tuesday, Third Week of Advent

- **Readings of the Day**

- Judges 13.2-7, 24-25a
- Psalm 71
- Luke 1.5-25

- **Reflection**

The angel Gabriel’s conversation with Zechariah leads to him being struck mute for asking the question ‘How will I know this?’. This might seem to be a cruel reaction on the part of Gabriel. However, in asking this question, Zechariah is admitting that he did not believe the angel and doubted that it was indeed possible for him to have a son.

Am I ready to believe no matter how impossible it seems? Zechariah’s faith may have failed when his prayer was about to be answered, but God had seen the faith of both him and his wife Elizabeth lived over a lifetime, and he did answer their prayers. May this be an encouragement to us to keep the faith, even when it seems that our prayers are not being answered.

<https://www.sacredspace.ie/scripture/luke-15-25>

- **Prayer**

*God of the prophets, you sent John into the world to proclaim the coming of your son. Give us ears to hear the proclamations of your promises and eyes to see your presence in this world. Amen.*



- **Readings of the Day**

- Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10d
- Psalm 24
- Luke 1:26-38

- **Reflection**

The Annunciation must be one of the most commonly depicted scenes in the history of art. From paintings, to music, to poetry and narrative, the story of Gabriel's message to Mary—infused with doubt and belief, joy and sorrow, fear and comfort—has proved to be remarkably generative for both the life of faith and the creative impulse. It is a story sharing space with both devastation and hope, and this means it is a story for all of us, whoever we are and wherever we are in life.

Mary's response is a resounding 'yes', her refrain the glorious Magnificat, but how many times must the fragmented memory of that angelic meeting replayed in her head with anxiety or fear or worry or doubt alongside the rejoicing? And how many times after stomach pains, or a fall, or not feeling the baby move for a while must the distressed thought, 'something isn't right', consumed her mind regardless of miracle and promise? And how perfectly appropriate and real and human this is.

Mary's 'yes' is the vessel through which God-among-us steps into our world and opens up to us as one of us. Our 'yes' today is not a claim to perfection or a statement of moral superiority any more than the days we can only bring ourselves to say, 'no, I just can't' mark us out as deficient or failures. The openness of God's love is unending, so that wherever we find ourselves we are welcomed and embraced. So whatever these strained circumstances and whatever insecurity they may cause, 'the Lord is with you, do not be afraid'.

- **Prayer**

*We beseech you, O Lord, pour your grace into our hearts, that as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion, we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever.*



Thursday December 21, 2023

Thursday, Third Week of Advent

- **Readings of the Day**

- Zephaniah 3.14-18a or Song of Songs 2.8-14
- Psalm 33
- Luke 1.39-45



- **Reflection**

It's December. It's Advent. It's a busy time of year for many people. Crowds are coming and going in preparation for Christmas. So many years ago, Mary and her cousin Elizabeth also lived in a time of advent, of waiting and preparation for their promised sons to be born. When Mary learned she would be the mother of God's promised Savior, it was no surprise that she, at once, went to be with Elizabeth.

Mary needed to be with someone who would understand and encourage her. Mary's journey, going home, must have been a journey of both joy and peace.

For us, also, Advent can be a time of anticipation and preparation, a time to be in God's Word, to ponder again the precious Christ Child God has sent to save us.

-Donna J Streufert

- **Prayer**

*Lord Jesus, accept my praise and thanks for the blessings of Advent. Remind me that you alone are worthy of my attention and praise. AMEN*

Friday December 22, 2023

Friday the Third Week of Advent

- **Readings of the Day**

- 1 Samuel 1.24-28
- Responsorial Canticle 1 Samuel
- Luke 1.46-56



- **Reflection**

Hannah, Samuel's mother, praised God because He had provided salvation for His people. She had learned that God will humble people who view themselves as self-sufficient, but He will help those who cast themselves on Him, asking Him to provide what they need. Therefore, the godly and the wicked will experience vastly different fates. The Old Testament writers spoke of Sheol, the abode of the dead, as though it were a huge underground cave where judgment takes place. The whole point of this inspired poetic prayer is that people should trust in the Lord. Hannah had done this, and God had blessed her miraculously.

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<https://www.studydrive.com/commentaries/eng/dcc/1-samuel-2.html>

- **Prayer**

*God, take my heart, my desires, my life and transform them to make me a stronger follower of yours. I want to grow in my relationship with you, but I need to trust you more for that to happen. So, help me on my journey, help me to connect to you more. I need you God. Amen.*

Saturday December 23, 2023

Saturday of the Third Week of Advent

- **Readings of the Day**

- Malachi 3.1-4; 4.5-6
- Psalm 25
- Luke 1.57-66

- **Reflection**

Have you ever been in a difficult trial, and you knew that you were in the trial because of your own sin? You knew that you should cry out to God for help, but you were afraid to do so because of your sin. Or maybe your problems were not due to deliberate sin, but rather because of immaturity or stupid decisions. Sometimes even though I have prayed for guidance and wisdom I still have done something that resulted in a heap of trouble. What should we do at such times? Psalm 25 teaches us to seek God in the hard times, no matter what reason we are in those hard times. <https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-25-seeking-god-hard-times>

- **Prayer**

*Please give me Your strength to face today's hard and troubled times, with the confidence of knowing that Your strength is made perfect in my weakness. Thank You that my strength comes from You, and that Your grace is sufficient for all the tasks and duties that will cross my daily path, not only for today but for the rest of my journey through life. Amen*

