

Read

Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

LIVING THE WORD

Third Sunday of Advent

December 16, 2018



REFLECTION

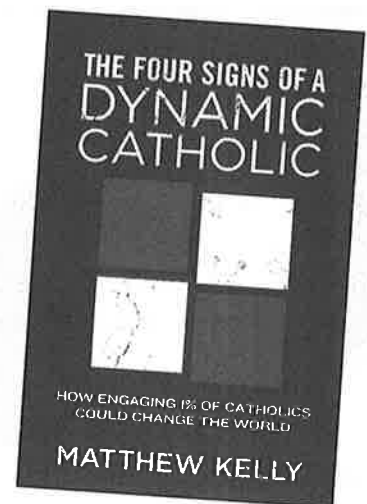
This Sunday is called Gaudete Sunday, (pronounced “Gow-day-tay”), which means “rejoice” in Latin. You could practically feel the writer of today’s First Reading tingling with anticipation and joy in God’s promise that salvation would come for his people and would be fulfilled in Christ. People waited for centuries for the Messiah to come! Today we are incredibly blessed to look back with gratitude to that first Christmas, and to know that Christ is here with us now. The incredible gift of the Eucharist is Christ’s very being poured out for us. We have the fullness of what people longed for and waited for, for so many years. Ponder this great gift and pray that you may always long for the gift of Christ in the Eucharist. In today’s Gospel, John the Baptist in the Gospel offers very practical advice on what the fruit of this fulfillment of our hope should be: we are called to share everything we have with others. We should be generous with our material goods and give of our very selves. In the Second Reading, St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to be generous—a direct result of our joy in Christ should be kindness to all. Just as Jesus poured out himself on the Cross, we are called to pour out ourselves to those around us in love. This will bring us true and lasting peace.



ACTION

Give or make a gift for someone who is in need. It doesn’t have to be expensive; it could be as simple as sending a thoughtful card. If you are creative, you will find plenty of opportunities. Research local crisis pregnancy centers, parish outreaches, and nursing homes. Discuss your ideas with your parents and youth minister and have them send the gift directly. It is best to call in advance and make sure that the facilities can accept your gift(s). You could also give to an elderly friend, grandparent, a parishioner who is grieving the loss of a family member or friend, someone who was recently married or had a new baby, or someone at school who doesn’t have many friends. Or, give your time by caroling at a nursing home or serving at a soup kitchen.

You might enjoy reading Matthew Kelly’s book, *4 Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, especially the chapter on “Generosity.”



? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What gifts has God blessed you with this year? Make a list.
- ❖ What are some areas in which you can more intentionally rejoice rather than complain?



December 16, 2018

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LECTIONARY #9C

Zephaniah 3:14–18a

Isaiah 12:2–3, 4, 5–6

Philippians 4:4–7

Luke 3:10–18

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

God is always near us. We need not be anxious or worried because he hears our prayers and wants us to share with him our concerns. The Gospel reminds us not to panic or to be satisfied with what we have. If we keep our focus on God we will know the way. If we turn our eyes and thoughts to the world, we may lose our way. Today we seem to face more anxiety and worry than every before, especially our teens. Teens live in a world where nothing is private, everything is posted on social media, there is no mystery in life, and immediate gratification is expected. Today's message is "Don't panic!" Of course, in order for us not to panic, we must find trust in God. Trusting in God and keeping our attention focused upon him helps us remain on the right path. Yet, society tempts and taunts us with many things that take us off that path. That, in turn, can cause anxiety and worry. As you prepare to hear the Word of God this week, ask yourself these questions and listen to the message with an open heart:

- ▶ Do I trust God?
- ▶ Do I believe that the peace of God will guide my heart and mind?
- ▶ What will it take for me to surrender to God all my anxiety and worry?

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The Third Sunday of Advent is often referred to as Gaudete Sunday, meaning "Joy" or "Rejoice" Sunday! It is a day for rejoicing in this "devout and expectant" time (*Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar*, 39). The organ returns, flowers again grace the altar, and the liturgical color may shift from violet to rose. We rejoice because "the Lord is near" (Philippians 4:5). Even as we continue to await the Lord's coming at the end of time, and to be birthed anew at Christmas, we know that the Lord is already with us in his Word and in his sacraments, and in the Church, which is his Body. In a special way, he is with us in his beloved poor.

Q FOCUS: *Do not be afraid or anxious for God is always near you.*

Church Teaching Connection

Since his acceptance of the office, Pope Francis has surprised many people with his response to life, riches, and ministry through his message of simplicity. Pope Francis has refused riches, expensive cars, special treatment, and has continuously called us to do the same. He reminds us that Jesus lived a humble and simple life—a life that we too are to embrace. God comes to us in simple ways. Encourage the students to search on the Internet for various talks and statements Pope Francis has made. His encyclical *Laudato si': On Care for our Common Home* (2016) focuses on the ecology and how our lack of respect for our God-given resources is having a negative impact on our world. Encourage students to note how we in America stockpile and then waste precious resources. Ask:

- ▶ What do you think needs to be done in this world and how can you help?

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 3:10-18

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection (you may need to recap the other readings for the teens to provide a context for today's reflection):

Once again this week we are reminded to keep our focus on God. The First Reading notes that we have no enemies in God; the Psalm reminds us that God is always with us; and St. Paul's letter stresses that "The Lord is near" (Philippians 4:5). Again, we are told we should not be anxious—God wants to know our requests through prayer and petition. We don't have to be afraid! However, many teens today suffer a higher rate of anxiety than we have ever seen.

► **What do you think this says about today's society/culture?**

Another message present in Paul's letter is "peace" (Philippians 4:7). St. Paul states that the "peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). If we keep our gaze on God, we will not lose sight of our path. In the Gospel this week, John the Baptist responds to the people's cry, "What should we do?" (Luke 3:10).

► **His message seems to be "Don't panic!" Sounds so easy. What does it take to not panic?**

We have to have great trust in something if it is to give us the comfort we need to avoid panic. Teens today are experiencing panic attacks and often fear that they will not have enough, or even worse, that they will not be good enough.

► **How can our reliance on God and our belief that he dwells within each one of us help us believe we are good enough?**

The other message John gives us in the Gospel is that we should be satisfied with what we have. He warns the people not to collect any more than they need.

► What types of things do you collect more of than you should? Is it money, friends, “likes” on social media, awards, AP classes, activities?

► What is it that we cling to as a means of defining us as a success?

The underlying message in the Gospel is that we don't have to worry about life. This sounds so simple. If we focus on God, we don't have to worry. Life will take care of itself under the guidance and direction of God. God always provides what we need. Perhaps we often focus too much on what we want, or what we *think* we need instead of what we *truly* need. We stockpile. We collect. We accumulate. We clutter our lives with things that, in the bigger picture, don't matter. The message is clear. Don't panic. God is near. God will provide.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 92.

God reminds us that we need not be anxious, that we can place our trust in him.

God reminds us that we are never alone, that God is always near. This can give us the comfort and strength to face the things that may cause us to worry or become anxious.

God reminds us not to try to accumulate things in this life as a false means of safety or provision. We can live simply, with fewer things, and have a clearer view of the path ahead with less distractions.

Act on the Word

Stay the Path: Part III

You will need construction paper, pens, markers, scissors, and old magazines for this activity. See the directions on page 82.

Once again this week, consider what you can add to the path you created in week one.

► In what ways did you follow God and allow him to be the light on your path?

► What can you add to your path this week that will reflect your trust in God?

Perhaps this is a good week to declutter your life of the things you don't need.

► Can you share your abundance with another? Consider doing this as a group or as individuals.

Contemplative Prayer

Take time at the end of your session for contemplative prayer. Invite teens to visualize a scene where they are with Jesus. Ask them to imagine placing all the things they are anxious or worried about in a box. Now, hand that box over to Jesus. Tell them to notice the feeling of relief as you pass the box to Jesus.

► What did you put in the box?

► Can you trust that God will guide you and lead you and provide the light you need to illuminate your path so the worries don't cause you to stumble?

Closing Prayer

Loving Father,

you gave us your Son

to be the Light of the world and the Peace of every nation.

May we discover the strength of this Light alive in our hearts

and try to live our lives in a peaceful and loving way in all that we say and do.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.