

Advent week #3

Joy



December 13-19, 2020

Hello, sun in my face.

Hello, you who made the morning and spread it over the fields and into the faces of the tulips and the nodding morning glories, and into the windows of, even, the miserable and the crotchety –best preacher that ever was, dear star, that just happens to be where you are in the universe to keep us from ever-darkness, to ease us with warm touching, to hold us in the great hands of light –good morning, good morning, good morning.

Watch, now, how I start the day in happiness, in kindness.”

— Mary Oliver



It is Gaudete Sunday! The word means “rejoice!” We are getting nearer to the birth of the Lord, and this Sunday and its pick candle invites us to enter the week with joy!

At this time of year, there are often celebrations and gatherings that help us feel the joy of the holiday season. I know that it is challenging in 2020 because many of those look different or are not happening after all. There is a deeper joy, however, that we can each experience no matter what our holiday looks like. This is the joy of becoming the person we were created to be. This is the joy of recognizing who we are as the unique person God created us to be. This is the joy of following our deepest desires.

As you enter into this week, consider the following questions:

- What brings me true joy?
- What do I think brings my family joy? My friends? How can I contribute to their joy?
- What grace(s) can I ask from God as I foster joy in my heart and in the hearts of those around me?

Consider engaging with others in conversation about their own desires for joy as you move through this week.

Lord, in my heart, I desire to know and be the person you created me to be. I desire to be joyful about the world you created and my part in it. Help direct my heart towards the deepest desires you placed there, the things that will bring me joy. And help me spread that joy to others. Amen.



A DAILY EXAMEN ON JOY

The examen is a daily reflection created by St. Ignatius Loyola that invites a person to examine their day - looking intentionally for where they found God and where God was more difficult to find. Consider praying this Examen daily during week #3 of the Advent Season.

I spend a moment quieting myself, inviting the holy Spirit to help me examine my day.

I look back on my day since I woke up. What moments in my day brought me joy?

I pause in gratitude to celebrate with God these tangible moments of joy.

When was it hard for me to feel joy today?

I ask God for forgiveness for any of my reactions today that might have lessened the joy of others.

I look towards the rest of my day (or tomorrow). What do I need from God in order to experience a renewed sense of joy?

I pause to ask God for what I need.

Lord, as I end this examen, help me to see that the nearer I come to You and the person You created me to be, the more my heart will be filled with joy.

Amen



Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.

-- Henri J. M. Nouwen.

A DAILY REFLECTION ON SCRIPTURE

Quotes are chosen from the daily Scripture readings from the Catholic Lectionary. Daily readings can be found at uscgb.org.

Sunday: "He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light." (Jn 1: 6-8)

How am I called to testify to the light in my own life?

Monday: "When Jesus had come into the temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" (Mt 21:23)

In what ways do I allow the opinions of others inhibit my joy?

Tuesday: "Jesus said to them, "Amen I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you." (Mt 21:30)

Today's Gospel speaks about belief and turning our hearts towards God. How is God working on your heart right now?

Wednesday: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised..." (Lk 7:22).

What miracles, big and small, are God performing in your life right now?

Thursday: "Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations." (Mt 1:17)

When I consider my own family line, what am I proud of? What changes do I want to make to increase the joy of my future generations?

Friday: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us.'" (Mt 1:23)

Joseph's news of the future birth of his son probably carried mixed emotions. What in my life these days causes me both heartache and joy.

Saturday: "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness.." (Lk 1:13)

What unexpected gifts this year have brought you joy and gladness?