



Worshipping & Praying Together as a community dispersed

during the week beginning
Sunday, 13th December 2020
The Third Sunday of Advent

The Parish of Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.

The worshipping communities of the Cathedral and St Peter's Hamilton.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!

The Third Sunday in Advent is also known as "Gaudete" Sunday. The traditions surrounding this Sunday go back as far as the fourth or fifth century, as does the season of Advent itself. Advent was originally a forty-day penitential season, like Lent, and so "Gaudete Sunday" was the Advent counterpart to "Laetare Sunday," which marks the midpoint in Lent.

On Gaudete Sunday, the theme of Advent shifts to "The Lord is near." This shift is marked by a lighter mood and a heightened sense of joyous anticipation. Liturgically, the colours also lighten, and the priest may wear rose-coloured vestments, and the third candle of the Advent wreath is rose-coloured (or pink).



The word "Gaudete" is Latin for "Rejoice." Advent 3 celebrates that God who loves us, is still in charge, and that we await his coming, not with fear, but with tremendous joy.

The First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, reflects this joy:

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thess 5:16-18

What better time to be rejoicing, as we can now rejoice in the Advent of our Lord Jesus in song!

Families@Five will return after the holidays on Saturday, 6 February at 5.00pm.

Eucharists are offered at Christ Church Cathedral on Sundays at 8.00am and 10.30am, and Monday to Friday at 8.30am (following Morning Prayer).

Eucharists are also offered at St Peter's Hamilton at 11.00am on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Morning and Evening Prayer and Holy Communion (Wednesdays and Sundays) are streamed each day:

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXyas2uhJUNOnDetOpPdUOg>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/christchurchcathedralnewcastle/>

The Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm 126

1 When the Lord turned again the fortunes of Zion:
then were we like those restored to life.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter:
and our tongue with singing.

3 Then said they among the heathen:
'The Lord has done great things for them.'

4 Truly the Lord has done great things for us:
and therefore we rejoiced.

5 Turn again our fortunes O Lord:
as the streams return to the dry south.

6 Those who sow in tears:
shall reap with songs of joy.

7 They that go out weeping bearing the seed:
shall come again in gladness
bringing their sheaves with them.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

We appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. Beloved, pray for us. Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

John 1: 6-8,19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Why then are you baptising if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?”

John answered them, “I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptising.



Reflection on a page by *The Reverend Angela Peverell*

On this *Gaudete* Sunday we are certainly rejoicing, and very loudly **in song** this week. Our Advent tradition also encourages us to sharpen our focus on that greatest prophet, according to our Lord Jesus, the voice crying out in the wilderness, John, the Baptizer.

Last week Mark told us that John was a curious and distinctive character, living in the wilderness of Judea, wearing a garment made of camel's hair and a leather belt, subsisting on a diet of locusts and wild honey. John baptised his followers in the River Jordan with the baptism of repentance, in preparation for the Word of God, who would come, very soon, in the person of Jesus.

This week, we read from the Gospel of John the Evangelist, a witness to the ministry of John the Baptizer, who recalls the encounter between John and the priests and Levites, who demanded to know what this curious prophet would "say" about himself. The Baptizer was very clear that his mission was simply to compel the people to repent, and to be baptised, because the Kingdom of God is at hand! John knew that the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled in Jesus and his purpose was to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Lord, crying out: "*Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight!*" (Isaiah 40:3)

In the Gospel of Luke, John's call to action goes even further, calling on those who would repent and be baptised to change their ways; to share their resources generously and to show fairness when seeking payment, not using power to extort money from people, especially vulnerable people. Living as "the baptised" meant a conscious change of life and change of behaviours, to show justice and to show mercy.

Jesus himself, tells us in Matthew's Gospel, that John the Baptist was the fulfilment of the prophesy of the prophet Malachi: "*See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.*" (Malachi 3:1) The prophet Malachi warned the people of Israel that only the righteous and pure in heart will be able to withstand the coming of the Messiah, for on the day of his coming, the Lord will separate the righteous from the wicked.

John the Baptizer was very clear that the people of the world must turn back to God and repent of their sins and their rejection of God's ways, and that his mission was to point to the coming of the Lord Jesus, who will save the people of the world from sin and death.

John tells his followers in Matthew: "*I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*" (Matt 3:11) This is not just a message for the first Christian believers. This is the message for all Christian believers, for all time.

The apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "*Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Thess 5: 20-23)

John the Baptizer was also very clear that it was necessary for his mission to diminish or decrease, so that Jesus' mission could increase. (John 3:30) John's humility challenges all who are actively involved in the mission of the Church to witness to Jesus Christ as the saviour of the world, and this is what the community of believers does at the beginning of the First Letter of John: "*We declare to you what we have seen and heard.*" (1 John 1:3)

May our Christian communities today, especially in this time of Advent and Christmas, be witnesses to Jesus our saviour, even when our unbelieving world is hostile to the message, so that all the people of the world might repent and turn back to the Lord. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Readings for next week – The Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11,16

The Magnificat (A.P.B.A. Page 31)

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1: 26-38



Prayers for use during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ever present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is
unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost
inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.
For Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and
distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and
fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us
from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Please do not hesitate to contact Dean Katherine or Reverend Angela if you have any concerns at this time and if you would like for us to visit you at home.

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