

# Something Different for Advent 2018

Third Sunday of Advent ~ 16<sup>th</sup> December

What should we do?



**Our theme our 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Advent this year is 'Waiting in Hope'.**

*Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing.*

You are now on **Week 3** of our Advent Retreat. How did you get on last week? Did you wear your Advent colours? Did you notice anyone else wearing theirs? If not maybe try to do so this week and remember today is *Gaudete Sunday* so the colour this week is **Rose** for JOY! How is your piece of string/ribbon holding up? Have you been writing thoughts, inspirations in your journal?

This week's **task** is to **Notice** – Take 10 minutes at the end of the day to see the signs of Hope all around you. (*You may want to look at your life journey*). In prayer ask God to bring to mind experiences that day, whether large or small, through which you have sensed genuine love, genuine care, genuine compassion. People might come into your memory, or places where you felt welcomed and restored, or particular events. Write down a word or sentence in your journal/notepad that captures that time, without going into details; as the next memory comes write something down about that and so on, so that you end up with a long list of moments or memories. Most of these points of connection will be ordinary, everyday things. When you've finished spend some time looking at your completed list. Reflect with God about the shape love takes: how love practically expresses itself and brings Hope. Be open to be surprised!



## Prayer suggestions for the week

1. **Breathing exercise:** As you have been doing for the past two weeks, focusing on your breathing: take three deep slow breaths, then focus on your normal breathing. Do this for as long as you can. Build up the time each day to reach 5 mins (or more). This is the breath of life. Thank God for this gift. Repeat the following slowly: *"Be with me Lord, clothe me in your presence"*, for as long as you are comfortable and be aware of God who is with you and loves you always.
2. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**Lk3:10-18**). Read it a few times – come back to it again during the week parts can be tough!! ***Is there a word, phrase, idea that strikes you? In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Stay with this for a few moments.***

*And the crowds asked John the Baptist, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.*



- What then should we do? ... What then should you do? What is the Gospel asking of you?
- What is holding back, blocking God's love for you? What do you need to let go off?
- Is there a fire burning within you? How can you ignite this flame in others?
- What change does this passage call you to today? What is the Good News you proclaim?

Waiting in Hope

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Third Sunday of Advent ~ 16<sup>th</sup> December

## Consider this

Sometimes life just hurts. I wish there were a more delicate way to say that. I wish there were a clever way to explain this fact away – maybe some whimsical cliché that we can all have a chuckle over? But I've got nothing. The truth is there are days when the burdens of life can weigh on us so heavy that we're not sure how we'll lift it, much less carry it around. Around the middle of December it can be easy to be swept up in the holly, jolly tide of Christmas cheer. If life has dealt you a good hand, it's a quite enjoyable time of the year. But if life has dealt you a bad hand, if you have lost a love one during the year then that tide of Christmas joy can feel like it's drowning you. What do we do with this? For starters, we can call to mind that Advent is a season for people who are in darkness waiting for the sort of light that will save them. You can't commercialize or turn a profit on this sort of thing. Living in darkness and waiting for a great light isn't very easy to market either. Maybe that's why it's so easy to forget (or avoid) this reality when we're rushing through the season's numerous to-do lists. Author Taylor Caldwell writes, "I am not alone at all, I thought. I was never alone at all. And that, of course, is the message of Christmas. We are never alone. Not when the night is darkest, the wind coldest, the world seemingly most indifferent. For this is still the time God chooses." This season is still the time God chooses to bring the world's greatest hope into the very darkness of life that can seemingly weigh us down every day. There is, indeed, hope for those who live in darkness. May we stand in solidarity with those for whom darkness is an all too familiar reality this season. May we experience and share this light together. And maybe, just maybe if we look through the chaos, the pain and the struggle we see our true hope, the child in a manger.

(Adapted from *Hope in the Darkness: An Advent Reflection for Those Struggling With the Holiday Season*. By BGosden)



## Suggestions for the week:

- **Hope is an action more than a feeling.** We remember the works of God in the past and so anticipate the work of God in the future, leading us to act purposefully in the present. Ask God to show you an action you can take as an expression of hope, whether this in relation to your own circumstances, or someone you care for or the community or the church you are part of. Do at least one *act of random kindness* each day!
- Sometimes it helps to physically act out the walk of faith, a walk of hope. - Fix a point in the near distance that symbolically represents a place you sense God is inviting you to move to in faith. Now walk slowly to that point noting the fears, hopes and energy that arise as you do so. At your arrival point, talk with God about what it feels like to be there. Now retrace your steps to where you began. This time turn away from your destination and walk slowly in the other direction. What do you feel as you do so? Talk with God about this. Now repeat your journey back to your faith destination for a second time. What do you feel? What do you learn from this exercise?



## Thought for the week

**Plug into your parish.** We draw strength and hope from our community of faith! Every parish has Advent and Christmas liturgies (like the daily Mass liturgies and the Advent Reconciliation services), and they also have other seasonal activities. Engaging in them as a family (if possible) will help you keep Christ in the centre, and it will also help you to help others to keep Christ in the centre. Never underestimate the support you give to others. You are building up your parish by participating in these liturgies and activities!! Why not see how you can get more involved? Find out if there is a group or ministry you could bring your gifts to. Take the risk!

## Prayer for the Week

*Lord, I put my trust in you, I rest my hope in you.  
Keep my mind focused on you, my heart filled with you & outstretched to you, Amen*

*The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide. You can do some of them or all of them.  
Take your time – you have a full week.*