

ADVENT REFLECTION 2016

Week 3: Joyful expectation

The mood for the third week of Advent changes to one of joyful expectation as we reach the half way stage in our preparation. Known as Gaudete Sunday (the Latin for 'rejoice'), its jubilant theme is echoed in the pink priestly vestments. Here is an opportunity to focus on all that is good in our lives and to give heartfelt thanks. We rejoice in anticipation of the birth of our Saviour and reflect on our responsibility to care wisely for all creation.

LIVING RESPONSIBLY

Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last 200 years ... We are not God. The Earth was here before us and was given to us ... The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty ... We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.

Pope Francis *Laudato Si'*

SCRIPTURE

*It is the Lord who keeps faith forever,
who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the Lord, who sets prisoners free.
It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,
who raises up those who are bowed down,
the Lord, who protects the stranger
and upholds the widow and orphan.
It is the Lord who loves the just
but thwarts the path of the wicked.*

Psalm 145: 6-9

REFLECTION

Our modern world is so immediate that we have lost the joy of waiting patiently. The build-up to Christmas can be so frenetic that it's easy to lose sight of its true meaning. It's great to buy gifts for our loved ones, but do we need to spend so extravagantly?

To prepare well for the Christmas celebration it can be helpful to make space to sit quietly for a few minutes in the presence of God; to take time to wonder at the beauty of creation and to give thanks for all that is good.

ACTION IDEAS

- Look for a 'good news' story in your local newspaper.
- Avoid buying expensive new items - reuse or adapt.
- Swop skills and resources with friends and family.
- Give the gift of your time and friendship.
- Give hand-made cards and gifts or bake Christmas biscuits.

PRAYER OF FRANCISCAN CONVERSION

*Living God, where there is waste,
let us bring recycling;
where there is recycling,
let us bring reuse;
where there is reuse,
let us bring sustainability;
where there is sustainability,
let us bring justice;
where there is justice,
let us bring love.*



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PRAYER

Lord, there is so much bad news in our world: war; famine; natural disasters; cruelty; prejudice; self-interest.

And yet there is also much good: love; concern; solidarity; small, unseen, unselfish acts of kindness.

For the times I have focused only on the bad and failed to see the good, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times I have looked the other way because I was embarrassed and didn't know what to do, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times I have meant to do something, got distracted and then forgot my good intentions, I ask your forgiveness.

Open my mouth, Lord, to speak out boldly against injustice. May I be a willing advocate for those who live in despair and bring them words of comfort and hope.

SCRIPTURE

*Let the wilderness and the dry lands exult,
let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,
let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil,
let it rejoice and sing for joy.*

Isaiah 35:1