

Thought for the Week
15th December 2019
3rd Sunday in Advent

Advent, unlike Lent, is not a sad season, but rather is a season of approaching joy. As we light more Advent candles each week, the light gets brighter and brighter until Jesus comes. The third Sunday of Advent, sometimes called Gaudete Sunday, is symbolised by the rose candle, as rose is the colour of hope. Gaudete means 'rejoice' and certainly that is the mood of our readings today.

"Let the wasteland rejoice and bloom ...Look, your God is coming"

But what are we doing in preparation for the coming of our Lord. "What are we to do?" Such a good question? How many times do we ask ourselves? *What am I to do?* Christmas is 2 weeks away and I'm not ready for it. *What am I to do?* Have I had time to meditate on the advent themes to prepare myself for Christ's coming?

What am I to do? I haven't had time for my family because I am working all the time. *What am I to do?* I have not been feeling well, and someone close to me is ill. *What am I to do?* Maybe people around us are suffering – from hunger, depression, addictions, fear of violence, lack of money.

This is the same question that people were asking John the Baptist 2000 years ago. This is the human condition and that hasn't changed. In preparation for Christmas we have to forget our own selves and reach out to others.

We can choose to do this in one of a number of ways — we are supporting two Advent charities this year -

The Food Bank, which helps families in the area feed themselves when they have no money. As a mother I cannot imagine being unable to feed my children - even one meal a day.

Embrace The Middle East, which supports families living in war zones - so unimaginable for us in our comfortable lives here. How frightened the children caught in the fear and noise of conflict must feel and how helpless their parents.

Alternatively or as well, we can also support the parish Christmas tree by donating a gift to be given to the elderly and those who do not have much.

Forgetting of ourselves and our own problems can in itself bring us some peace. And God is with us every step of the way, walking beside us and holding our hand. God's love for us has not diminished despite what we have done, and do to Him. The first reading says that God is singing joyfully because of us. So we must not be afraid to pray to God and ask him anything, but do it with thanks in our hearts for we know He will hear us.

"Advent is a time for you and for me to clean up our acts. It's all a matter of getting down to the task of doing it first, instead of waiting for everybody else to first change their acts. Advent is a time for you and for me - personally. For if I am obsessed by what others are doing, thus diverting the moral spotlight from shining upon my own soul, nothing will change."

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