

A row of seven lit candles in shades of purple, pink, and white, with flames glowing against a dark background.

Advent 2018

Week 3

Accompany refugees this Advent

“I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near.”

Philippians 4:4-5

This week we will see the third candle lit on the Advent Wreath. The third Sunday of Advent is also called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is a Latin word that means “Rejoice”. This name is taken from the entrance antiphon; it is also echoed in today’s Reading from St Paul’s letter to the Philippians. It is a reminder that the Advent Season is a Season of Joy because our salvation is already at hand.

It is a great mystery of our salvation that God permits and even asks for human co-operation in His divine plan. In Sunday’s Gospel, John the Baptist answers a familiar question, when asked: “*what should we do?*” How many of us ask this question when we see the great need of many who are poor and forgotten by society? John’s answer is a clear indication of the active cooperation that God is calling us to:

‘If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.’ – Luke 3:11

This response is something that might make us stop and take notice, particularly at this time when we might be buying expensive gifts or filling the cupboards to bursting point with our favourite food and drink. It may make us uncomfortable to think of the amount we have been given and how little we give to others who are less fortunate.

However, at this mid-point in Advent, the scripture readings are right to alert us to issues of justice and equality. Responding with generosity to those less fortunate and those seeking asylum not only brings out the best in us, it allows us moments of great joy.

I am reminded of one of our refugee friends who visits the JRS Day Centre when she uttered her first English sentence. Throughout the years she has kept her dignity in spite of many hardships, ill health, disappointments, refusal after refusal in her effort to gain leave to remain in this country. Through all of this she remained an effervescent person, ready to listen and help others with a joy that permeates her whole being. As a volunteer you may think it was me who was doing the giving but I received far more from her in return. After many years waiting she recently received her leave to remain in this country, news that was met with much rejoicing!

As we move through advent towards Christmas, the scriptures are a reminder of the challenges people face and the dignity we each should be able to enjoy as children of God. May Christ be re-born in us representing as he does, the God who meets and helps us in our ordinary everyday life.

O King of All Nations, come into our world of joy and sorrow and stay with us always. Show us how to act in love and for the good of all, so that our brothers and sisters, both here and around the world, may know your glory and we may be transformed by your light and joy.



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