

## **REFLECTION FOR FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (GAUDETE SUNDAY)**

Dear brothers and sisters,

We have reached the Third Sunday of Advent, called Sunday of Joy. This Sunday's liturgy invites us to rejoice because the Lord is near. But it is not a superficial joy; it is the joy that is born of faith, even when we still walk amid uncertainties, expectations and sufferings.

Today's readings help us to understand what this joy is and where it comes from.

In the first reading, Isaiah announces something surprising:

‘The desert and the dry land will rejoice.’

This image is powerful: where no one expects life, God brings forth flowers; where everything is barren, God creates joy.

So too is Advent: God asks us to look at our lives - with their deserts, weariness, discouragement - and believe that He is coming to transform everything.

Isaiah also speaks of eyes that open, of lame people who leap, of tongues that are loosened: all of this points to the coming of the Messiah, the One who accomplishes what no human power can do.

And the reading ends with a promise: the redeemed will return with joy, and sadness will disappear.

This is what Advent announces: the true joy that comes from knowing that we are loved by God and that God does not abandon us in our deserts, but accompanies us, opens our eyes, gives us His love, His life. The joy we are invited to live is this joy. Let us rejoice because today the Lord continues to work wonders.

The responsorial psalm reinforces this message: God does not disappoint, He:

- remains faithful forever,
- does justice to the oppressed,
- gives food to the hungry,
- opens the eyes of the blind,
- protects and sustains the humble.

This is the source of our joy; we know in whom we trust. Today's liturgy does not ask us to invent joy, but to recognise it in God who is near.

In turn, in the second reading, St James calls for a fundamental attitude at this time: patience. He reminds us that the coming of the Lord is certain, but not immediate.

Just as the farmer waits for the rain, so too are we invited to wait for the coming of the Lord into our lives.

Sometimes we want quick results, immediate solutions, ready answers. But Advent reminds us that God acts at the right time, and our role is to be steadfast, consistent, and persevering.

Christian joy grows in patience: it is the joy of those who know how to wait.

Meanwhile, the Gospel presents us with John the Baptist in prison and anxious about Jesus, so he sends some of his disciples to question the Master:

‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we wait for another?’

A deeply human question, full of sincerity: John announced the Messiah, but now he faces darkness, suffering and doubt.

And Jesus responds not with theories, but with concrete signs:

- the blind see,
- the lame walk,
- the lepers are cleansed,
- the dead are raised,
- the poor are evangelised.

In other words: Isaiah's prophecy is coming true.

The joy of Advent is born here: God is acting, even when we do not clearly perceive it.

Jesus praises John, saying that among those born of women, no one is greater than him, but he also reminds us that the smallest in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the Kingdom that Jesus comes to make present among us, is greater than John the Baptist. With Jesus, the kingdom begins to happen, and blessed are those who adhere to it.

They can live with the certainty that they are not alone on their journey and that God's saving promises are being fulfilled.

This Sunday, the Word of God invites us to three attitudes:

### **1. Believe that God can transform our deserts.**

Even when everything seems dead, let us believe, because God makes our deserts blossom if we trust in him.

### **2. Wait patiently.**

Christian joy is a process, a journey, a maturing. It is there. So be patient and wait.

### **3. Recognise the signs of Jesus' presence.**

He continues to open eyes, lift up the fallen, heal wounds, and light the way.

This is the reason for the joy we celebrate this Sunday. God is near. Perhaps we still do not see things clearly, perhaps there are still doubts and sufferings, like John in prison, but Jesus' response continues to tell us today: see the signs of new life that are already happening. In every gesture of love that we share, that we experience, the Kingdom of God happens.

May this Advent lead us to see with new eyes and to welcome the joy that only God can give.

Amen.