

DOES THIS IMAGE HELP ME IN MY PRAYER?



**Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...**

Rejoice in the Lord always! Indeed, the Lord is near.  
*Entrance Antiphon*

Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees and say to all faint hearts, 'Courage! Do not be afraid. Look, your God is coming.' *First Reading*

You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. *Second Reading*

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. *Gospel Acclamation*

Say to the anxious: be strong and fear not, our God will come to save us. *Communion Antiphon*

**IS THERE SOMEONE WITH WHOM IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO SHARE MY REFLECTIONS THIS WEEK?**



AMDG

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
YEAR A, 11 DECEMBER 2016

**Rejoice in the Lord always!**

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray this Advent for joy and hope in the coming Lord. Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ever faithful to your promises and ever close to your Church: the earth rejoices in hope of the Saviour's coming and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time.

Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope which his presence will bestow, for he is Lord for ever and ever.

If I can, I go to my favourite place to pray. Perhaps I light a candle to remind me that I am in God's holy presence. It is good to read the prayer slowly several times.

What mood am I in today? What do I want to share with the Lord?

I reflect on his Church, on my Diocese, on my Parish.

In what ways do they express the joy and hope the coming of our Lord will bring? What part do I play in their celebration?

I pray the text again. Is there any sadness in my heart? Where does it come from?

I speak to the Lord about it; I tell him simply about the situations that might be preventing me from feeling truly happy and hopeful at his coming.

I pray for greater trust.

## FIRST READING – ISAIAH 35: 1–6.10

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.

The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it,  
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;  
they shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the splendour of our God.

Strengthen all weary hands,  
steady all trembling knees  
and say to all faint hearts,  
'Courage! Do not be afraid.

'Look, your God is coming,  
vengeance is coming,  
the retribution of God;  
he is coming to save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
the ears of the deaf unsealed,  
then the lame shall leap like a deer  
and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy;  
for those the Lord has ransomed shall return.

They will come to Zion shouting for joy,  
everlasting joy on their faces;  
joy and gladness will go with them  
and sorrow and lament be ended.

This famous passage speaks of great hope: the Jews in Exile in Babylon will – as had their ancestors at the time of the Exodus from Egypt – be rescued by the goodness of God.

For us, it points to the Redemption, the Kingdom of God, that will come to us through the Christ-child.

As I ponder these words, I ask God for his gift of hope that I may be an agent of hope in a world where disillusionment is rife.

## GOSPEL – MATTHEW 11: 2–11

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out in the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those with fine clothes are found in palaces! Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet; he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, all of the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

There is much action in this passage and many questions being asked. With the help of my imagination, I may like to enter the scene to hear the discussion between Jesus and John's messengers.

I may then feel drawn to focus on John in his prison, on his doubts and uncertainties.

As a result, do I find myself asking similar questions? Prisons do not always have bars, they can be of our own making.

Do Jesus' questions invite me to ponder my values? In my time of prayer? As I travel to work? As I go round the shops before Christmas?

I reflect on the opportunities I have in my family, in my place of work, in my parish, to contribute to building the Lord's Kingdom.

I pray with those Advent characteristics of patient waiting, longing for the One to come, so that, with the help of God's grace, I really will be ready this Christmas to meet Christ in the sacraments and in other people, especially those in any sort of need.