



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Third Sunday of Advent

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday

The Church calls the third Sunday of Advent *Gaudete¹ Sunday*. We pause this Sunday, reflecting on the penitential nature of Advent (symbolized by the colour purple), and pivot to prepare for the birth of Jesus. The readings help us to see the upcoming fulfillment of God's promises to send us a Messiah in His Son, Jesus.

The candle we light is rose-coloured this week to give us joy and help us visualize this shift in our life, moving us from judgment to birth.

The readings invite us to celebrate Christ in the everyday events of our lives. Gaudete Sunday is an encouraging day to rejoice with confidence that the Lord's birth is soon, and the Lord is faithful.

In the Gospel, John sends his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the one they have been waiting for. Jesus answers by sharing signs that show the Kingdom of God is here. He says the blind can see, the lame can walk, the deaf can hear, the dead come back to life, and the poor receive good news.

We can embrace Gaudete joy by patiently navigating trials—whether family stresses, facing global unrest or even preparing for Christmas. Try to recognize Jesus in the everyday events of life. Rejoice always—even in moments of difficulty.

¹ Gaudete Sunday receives its name from the first Latin word of the entrance antiphon, "Rejoice," derived from St. Paul's writing to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always" (4:4).

Background

Isaiah 35:1–6a, 10 is a hymn that expresses hope and joy, focusing on God bringing restoration and life from desolation. Written around the 6th century BCE, it anticipates a new era in which God redeems creation and humanity, pointing to both Christ's coming and the future kingdom. This week's reading shifts the Advent season towards joyful anticipation, balancing earlier themes of repentance with hope. It is a fulfillment of the messianic expectations of the Jewish people, using the hopeful imagery of deserts blooming, the lame leaping, and the ransomed singing as Christ approaches.

Psalm 46 is a hymn of God's protection that celebrates divine presence as a place of refuge amid cosmic and political turmoil. The verses highlight God's intervention to quell chaos, establish peace, and assert universal lordship, themes that resonate deeply with Gaudete Sunday.

James 5:7–10 is a pastoral exhortation to persevere in the face of trials, urging believers to await the Lord's parousia (coming) with steadfast hearts, exemplified by the farmer's vigilance and the prophets' endurance. In Advent, it invites rejoicing not despite adversity but through patient trust in Christ's advent, which transforms waiting into witness. The reading radiates Gaudete hope: patient as farmers and prophets, believers await the Lord who stands at the door, transforming suffering into the kingdom's abundant yield.

Matthew 11:2–11 presents John the Baptist inquiring whether Jesus is the expected Messiah, followed by Jesus' affirmation through messianic signs and his praise of John as the greatest of the prophets. The reading heightens the season's joyful expectation by verifying Christ's identity amid doubt. In Advent, it invites believers to recognize the Lord's nearness through his works, rejoicing in the kingdom's inauguration despite trials, as John did from prison. It radiates Advent joy: John's inquiry meets Jesus' affirmation, inviting us to see, hear, and rejoice in the One who comes to save, making even the least in his realm greater than the prophets of old.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

We gather today to celebrate the third week of Advent, also known as Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday. It is a special day when we begin to think about the soon-to-arrive return of Jesus. Go with your leaders to listen to the readings and learn about ways to prepare for Jesus.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Lord God, you give us you as we await the birth of your Son, Jesus. Fill us with happiness and peace as we prepare for the birth of Jesus.

Amen. Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

READINGS

Isaiah 35.1-6a, 10

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 146.6c-7, 8-9a, 9b-10

R. Lord, come and save us.

It is the Lord who keeps faith forever,
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free. R.

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind
and lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous
and watches over the strangers. R.

The Lord upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations. R.

SECOND READING

James 5:7-10

A reading from the letter of Saint James.

Be patient², brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord.

The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth,
being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

You also must be patient.

Strengthen your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is near.

Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another,
so that you may not be judged.

See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters,
take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

² Patience is one of the virtues lacking most in God's people.

GOSPEL

Matthew 11.2-11

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

When John³ heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ,⁴ he sent word by his disciples who said to Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind⁵ receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers⁶ are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness⁷ to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a Prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger⁸ ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' "Truly I tell you, among those born⁹ of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The Gospel of the Lord.

³ John was a prophet and ascetic who prepared the way for Jesus as the Messiah and baptized him in the Jordan River. The role of the Baptist in salvation history was expressed eloquently in the Gospel of John: "He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light" (John 1:8).

⁴ The term, going back to the Greek Messiah, denotes an anointed person. "The Messiah" is usually translated in Greek as "Christos," the Christ.

⁵ Physical blindness in the biblical period was very common. The suffering of the blind person was made worse by the common belief that the affliction was due to sin. Jesus frequently healed blind persons (Matt. 9:27–31; 12:22; 20:30–34; Mark 10:46–52; John 9:1–7). Perhaps there is no greater evidence of His compassion and power than that seen in His willingness and ability to heal those who lived in darkness and hopelessness.

⁶ When Christ healed a leper, he demonstrated his power to overcome uncleanness.

⁷ In Scripture, the words rendered 'wilderness' or 'desert' include not only the barren deserts of sand dunes or rock that colour the popular imagination of a desert, but also steppe-lands and pasture lands suitable for grazing livestock.

⁸ Jesus evaluates John finally by identifying him as the one promised by Scriptures to precede the coming of the Messiah and messianic fulfillment.

⁹ John is the one in whom the OT expectation has finally been fulfilled, pointing to the presence of the Messiah. From a human point of view, no one greater than John has ever been born.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to hear the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

First Reading

We will now listen to our first reading again, but in a different way.

Imagine a super dry, sandy desert—like a big, empty playground where nothing grows, and everyone feels tired and scared. No flowers, no water, just hot sand and lonely winds. But guess what? God has a big surprise plan! He says, "Hey, desert, time to wake up and party!" Suddenly, the ground starts to sparkle with colourful flowers popping up everywhere, like pretty crocuses dancing in the sunshine. The whole place sings with joy, as if the hills are sharing their green glory. Everyone sees God's amazing power shining bright!

God whispers, "Don't be afraid—I've got you! Be brave. I'm coming to save the day, chasing away all the bad stuff with my love." And oh boy, what happens next? The blind kids open their eyes and see rainbows! The deaf friends hear birds chirping and laughter! The ones who can't walk jump like happy deer, and even those who struggle to talk burst into songs of "Yay, God!"

Cool water gushes out like a giant splash pad in the desert, turning dry spots into fun streams and pools. No more thirst or sadness!

Finally, God's special people march home to their happy city, singing and dancing all the way. Joy crowns their heads like party hats that never fall off. They grab hold of gladness, and all the tears and sighs? Poof—they run away forever!

This is God's promise for Christmas time: Jesus is coming to make our "deserts" (like sad days) bloom with His love. Get ready to rejoice!

Responsorial Psalm

We will now listen to the Responsorial Psalm again, but in a different way.

R. God, come and save us.

The Lord keeps his faith forever,
who shows justice for the suffering;
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets us free. R.

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind
and lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous
and watches over the strangers. R.

The Lord upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations. R.

Second Reading

We will now listen to the second reading again, but in a different way.

A farmer planted a field with seeds.

He watered them and waited for the sun and rain to nurture them and make them grow.

It took time, but the farmer did not give up.

Be patient, like that farmer.

Don't let your heart and soul become tired.

Nurture it like the farmer.

Gospel

We will now listen to a reading from the Gospel again, but in a different way.

John the Baptist was arrested and placed in prison. However, he heard what Jesus was doing and sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the Saviour they were waiting for.

Jesus told them to tell John what they themselves had seen: the blind can see, the lame can walk, the sick are healed, and the poor hear good news.

Then Jesus told the people that John is a great prophet who helped prepare the way for him.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent—Gaudete Sunday! We lit the rose candle to rejoice because Jesus is coming soon. Our readings tell us about waiting with joy for God's promises.

Have you ever gone on a long trip with your parents?

Did it seem like it took time to get there?

In the first reading, Isaiah says the desert will bloom like flowers, full of singing. God will strengthen weak hands, calm fearful hearts, and heal: the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, the speechless will sing. God's people will return with everlasting joy—no more sadness!

Are you happy when you arrive at your destination after your trip?

It can bring you great joy, can't it?

The psalm praises God who made everything and keeps promises forever. God gives justice to the suffering, food to the hungry, opens blind eyes, lifts up the sad person, cares for strangers, orphans, and widows.

Who else do you think God helps? (Maybe a friend at school.)

Who can you help?

In the Gospel, John the Baptist, in prison, sends friends to Jesus: "Are you the promised one?" Jesus replies, "Tell John: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor get good news. Blessed are those not offended by me." Jesus calls John the greatest prophet, preparing His way—but even the least in God's kingdom is greater! John wondered, but Jesus showed signs that we heard about from our first reading from Isaiah.

God promises us great joy and help while we wait patiently, and Jesus fulfills it. Like waiting for a surprise party, Advent builds excitement.

What signs of Jesus do you see? A kind hug?

Share joy this week: be patient, help others and pray. God loves your heart!

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

Alternative Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

What did John the Baptist want his disciples to ask Jesus?

John the Baptist was waiting for Jesus. Sometimes, waiting is difficult; however, it doesn't mean that waiting cannot be joyful. John was joyful even in prison because he was waiting for the Saviour of the world, who is Jesus Christ.

Joy doesn't always mean that we are happy, laughing, or excited about something. Joy means having a sense of peace within us because we know that God loves us.

What did Jesus tell John's disciples?

Sometimes we must wait for things that are very special – such as birthdays, visitors or even special events in our lives like First Communion or Confirmation. These are also special times in our lives when Jesus comes to us.

At other times, we also must wait or be patient when life is hard, like recovering from an illness or grieving because someone has passed away. We wait patiently in hope because Jesus tells us that He has come into the world. Jesus comes to heal the sick, comfort the lonely and is present to those who may have lost hope. The message is to be patient in our waiting and to be joyful, for we know that God loves us.

How do you think you can be with other people who are having a difficult time?

Smiling, praying for them, being kind, helping parents.

John was having a hard time, but Jesus and his friends were there for him. Every time you show kindness or love to another person, you are making Jesus' light shine brighter in the world. You are bringing God's joy to them. That is making the pink candle on the Advent wreath shine even brighter. And we can do this every day of the year – not just in Advent.

This Advent, rejoice in God, for God brings healing and joy. Remember that Jesus is the One we wait for, and God is always with us. And...we can always share God's joy with others.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Let us ask God to help us as we wait with joy for Jesus. After each prayer, please respond: 'Come, Lord Jesus.' R: Come, Lord Jesus.

Assistant:

For the Church, that we may always share God's joy with the world. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For our families, that our homes may be filled with love and peace. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For people who are sad or sick, that God will bring them comfort and healing. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For all of us, that we may prepare our hearts for Jesus by being kind and joyful. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause] We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. R:

The Leader says:

Loving God, hear our prayers and fill us with your joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
Canadian Conferences of Catholic Bishops, 2009, adapted for children.
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