

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT – YEAR C



JOY

The Third Sunday of Advent is known as 'Gaudete Sunday', from the first word of the entrance antiphon at Mass, 'Rejoice ...!' (Phil. 4: 4.5). The third candle on the wreath is pink (rather than the usual purple) and symbolises joy in the coming of Christ. This same joy is also particularly evident today in the First Reading (Zeph 3: 14–18) and the Psalm, as well as in the passage from Philipians.

Second Reading Philipians 4: 4–7

Our passage this week comes from the end of Paul's letter to the Philipians. It is a final exhortation. There is no bitterness from this imprisoned man. On the contrary, echoing the beginning of his letter which we prayed last Sunday (Philipians 1: 3), Paul wants these new Christians to rejoice, or as in the Jerusalem translation which we hear at Mass, to 'be happy' in the Lord. It is this joy, this happiness, which prevents Paul from despairing. He wants the Philipians to be happy 'in the Lord'.

He gives a simple reason: *The Lord is near*. In Paul's mind, it is likely that he was referring to the Second Coming, but as contemporary Christians, we can also read it as meaning a close proximity in our hearts, always bringing comfort, encouraging and strengthening us.

Paul gives practical advice on how best to live a life centred on Christ, summing up what he said previously. The Philipians are to pray in gratitude, asking for 'anything' they need – and praying is concerned with all areas of our life.

The *peace of God* which the Philipians are promised is greater than the human mind can understand, able to accomplish more than we can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3: 20)

Using words which may reflect his current circumstances in prison, Paul assures the Philipians that the peace of God will 'guard [their] hearts and [their] thoughts'.



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

Gospel Luke 3: 10–18

Today's Gospel continues the story of John the Baptist. John, who is recognised as an effective preacher, delivers his message to the people in a direct and severe manner.

Prior to these words he had called the crowds a 'brood of vipers' (v.8), assuring them that their Jewish lineage would not save them from their wrongdoings, but that repentance and a new way of life was necessary. His harsh message may not have immediately struck his listeners as 'Good News'.

'Master, what must we do?'

Many people asked this question of John. In reply he highlighted the way they were to treat others, if their lives were to bear 'good fruit' (v.9). Above all else they were to have a social conscience, always acting justly and sharing what they had with those in need.

They were beginning to think that John might be the Christ

There had been no prophet for about 400 years. John's sudden appearance, his austerity, the way he spoke, led them to think that he was the Messiah. John quickly denied this, making clear that his position was less than a servant.

He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

The baptism with water that John gave was symbolic of inner repentance. The baptism that Jesus would give would be with the Holy Spirit and fire, an image that John would recognise as a purifying force.

His winnowing fan is in his hand

John painted a picture of judgement, but one that those who lived as he had instructed need not fear.

The winnowing fan was a large wooden shovel, which was used to toss grain into the air. The heavy grain fell to the ground and the chaff was blown away.

