

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

The Lord your God will exult with joy over you. *First Reading*

Sing and shout for joy
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. *Psalms*

The peace of God will guard your hearts
and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. *Second Reading*

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

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. Amen.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Zeph. 3: 14–18; Psalm: Isaiah 12: 2–6; Philippians 4: 4–7; Luke 3: 10–18



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ST. BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Third Sunday in Advent
Year C
16th December 2018

The Lord is near!

This week, 'Gaudete Sunday', we are called to rejoice, for the coming of the Lord is near. At the same time, we are invited to live out our preparation in the details of our daily lives.

The **First Reading** from Zephaniah is a joyful exultation, because the Lord is bringing back Zion, his people. God is in our midst and he dances for joy in his love for us.

The **Responsorial Psalm** does not come from the Psalter, but is a Song of Joy from the Book of Isaiah. It is a joyful canticle of trust in the Lord and of thanksgiving for all that he has done for us.

St Paul, in the **Second Reading**, speaks of his desire of happiness for the Philippians. The Lord 'is very near', so we need not worry – but trust in God who will grant us the peace of his Son.

In the **Gospel** this Sunday we meet John the Baptist again. But this time we hear his direct teaching and advice to the different groups among his followers. He also tells them of the One who is to come, who will baptise us with the Holy Spirit and fire.

This week, may we remind ourselves that the Lord is very near, in our midst, and that this is our joy.

Opening Prayer

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,
enable us, we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. Amen.

Second Reading Philippians 4: 4–7

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. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

As I settle to pray, I pause and consider how I feel at this moment – maybe eager to spend time with the Lord, or perhaps vaguely despondent, or...?

I place myself in God's loving presence, knowing he accepts me as I am.

St Paul wants us to be happy. What does happiness mean for me?

I take time to whittle down the list to what is essential to me.

What do I really desire?

I speak to the Lord about this and humbly ask him to grant my request.

I thank him, asking for the wisdom to hear his reply and to accept it.

'The Lord is very near.' I sit with this phrase. How real is this in my life?

Even if I do not feel it, can I say: 'In him I live and move and have my being'?

I consider that Christmas is close. In all the busy-ness of these days, how can I keep Christ at the centre of preparations?

Maybe I ask the Lord to be reborn in me and in my community.

I try to rest in his presence, praying for his peace to *'guard my heart and thoughts'*.

I pray for those I love, and for all who need the gift of peace, that they will savour it this Advent and Christmastide.

I end my prayer in a spirit of thanksgiving, and I make a slow sign of the cross.

Gospel Luke 3: 10–18

When all the people asked John, 'What must we do?' he answered, '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.' There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master what must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!'

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in the fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

I come to my place of prayer, and take the time to relax and become aware of being before the Lord.

When I am ready, I read the text slowly, a couple of times.

Perhaps I can visualise the scene; the crowds surrounding John the Baptist. I see the different groups: am I there, amongst them?

I notice how John has answers or advice for them all – direct and practical. Is this helpful for me, or do I have a question of my own?

I listen to John as he replies to their expectations of him. He is humble, honest and not power-seeking.

In what small, humble ways can I reveal Christ to those around me?

How can I bring comfort to others?

I speak to the Lord of this. Perhaps I ask for his Spirit too.

John trusts the Lord to save us, allowing evil to be blown away on the wind. Maybe I need to ask for the gift of greater trust and confidence in the Lord too.

I thank God for all those who have been prophets in my own life, and have revealed the Lord to me.

I end my prayer with *'Glory be...'*