

Questions to ponder

1. This Advent, do I need to revise my understandings of who Jesus is, what he is doing, and what he stands for?
2. Have past experiences or disappointments hindered me in any way from having a healthy perception of God?
3. What steps might I take in order to get beyond these experiences or disappointments?

A prayer

Lord, you have revealed your love to me by coming into this world as a helpless child, human in all things except sin. Let me respond to this great gift of love by making your love a reality to my family, colleagues, and friends; and let me make your love a reality to those around me who are afflicted and suffering. Keep me rooted in your love; allow me to gradually become a new person, transformed by the receiving and giving of your grace. Amen.

Suggested Advent actions

This week:

- I will mark the 'break' in Advent that occurs on Gaudete Sunday and find time to forego one distraction (television, radio, busy work of any kind, unnecessary phone calls, Internet) so that I can remind myself of God's love and his nearness to me.
- I will make an attempt to review any 'old tapes' (resentments, belittlements, losses) that are running repeatedly through my head and preventing me from having a proper perception of God. I will resolve to pack that 'old tape' away permanently and exchange it for the shelter of God's love.

Fr. John Moore 2015



The Third Week of Advent

A devotional guide

Week 3: 13th - 19th December 2015

'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice...The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.'

Philippians 4. 4, 5b-7

The Third Sunday of Advent has been known since medieval times as 'Gaudete Sunday'. 'Gaudete' is a Latin word which means 'rejoice', and it is also the first word of the Introit that is appointed for that day: 'Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico, gaudete. Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus: Dominus enim prope est. Nihil solliciti sitis: sed in omni oratione petitiones vestrae innotescant apud Deum. Benedixisti Domine terram tuam: avertisti captivitatem Jacob.' The English translation of the introit is found in Philippians 4. 4-6 (mostly quoted above) and in Psalm 85. 1.

Gaudete Sunday (not unlike Laetare Sunday in Lent) provides a break midway through a season which otherwise has a penitential character; and it signifies the nearness of the Lord's coming. On Gaudete Sunday, those churches that have Advent wreaths light the pink-coloured candle alongside the purple candles that were lit on the First and Second Sundays of Advent.

Rose-coloured vestments are also worn.

Whilst the spirit of Advent is one of expectation and preparation for the Feast of Christmas, on Gaudete Sunday a particular emphasis is placed on our joy and gladness in our promised redemption.

Suggested Scripture readings

During the week, you may decide to set a bit of time each day and read short passages of Scripture that are given to prompt our reflection, response and prayer.

Monday	Psalm 34. 1-6, 21-22
Tuesday	Zephaniah 3. 14-17
Wednesday	Luke 7. 18b-23
Thursday	Isaiah 45. 6b-8, 18, 21b-25
Friday	Jeremiah 23. 5-8
Saturday	Psalm 72. 1-2, 12-13, 18-19

We focus here on [Luke 7. 18b-23](#):

^{18b} The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples

¹⁹ and sent them to the Lord to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'

²⁰ When the men had come to him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"'

²¹ Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind.

²² And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.

²³ And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

Commentary

In this passage, John the Baptist (through his disciples) asks Jesus an unexpected question: 'Are you the one who is to come?' Those of us who have read other gospel accounts portraying John the Baptist as a confident witness to our Lord may be understandably surprised by the evangelist's query.

Has John (who is now in prison, cf. Luke 3. 20) lost his nerve and become troubled by uncertainty? Or is he asking the question because Jesus came bringing grace and healing, rather than fiery reform and judgement? Or does John ask because he wants our Lord to make a public announcement of his identity to the evangelist's messenger-disciples?

It is more likely that John is simply showing his eager hopefulness that Jesus is indeed the one of whom John said earlier: 'One who is more powerful than I is coming' (3. 16). In his response, our Lord gives a list of six actions that he has accomplished which have brought healing to the afflicted and the promise of redemption to the poor. All of these actions are glorious signs of the Coming One.

During the Advent season, we have an opportunity to think again about the identity of Christ, and about our perceptions of him. 'The one who is to come' has already come to the world once, and revealed himself to be the Son of God and the Redeemer and Saviour of the world.

When he comes again, our Lord will reveal himself not only to be Judge, but also the King who says to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matthew 25. 34).

'The one who is to come' came into the world once, *for you and for me*; and he will come to the world again, *for you and for me*.