

## Third Sunday of Advent – December 13, 2009 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!  
Sing joyfully, O Israel!  
Be glad and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem!  
The LORD has removed the judgment against you  
he has turned away your enemies;  
the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,  
you have no further misfortune to fear.  
On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!  
The LORD, your God, is in your midst,  
a mighty savior;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness,  
and renew you in his love,  
he will sing joyfully because of you,  
as one sings at festivals.

### Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

R. (6) Cry out with joy and gladness: for among  
you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

God indeed is my savior;  
I am confident and unafraid.  
My strength and my courage is the LORD,  
and he has been my savior.  
With joy you will draw water  
at the fountain of salvation.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you  
is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;  
among the nations make known his deeds,  
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you  
is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious  
achievement;  
let this be known throughout all the earth.  
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,  
for great in your midst  
is the Holy One of Israel!

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you  
is the great and Holy One of Israel.

### Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Brothers and sisters:  
Rejoice in the Lord always.  
I shall say it again: rejoice!  
Your kindness should be known to all.  
The Lord is near.  
Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,  
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,  
make your requests known to God.  
Then the peace of God that surpasses all  
understanding will guard your hearts and minds in  
Christ Jesus.

### Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize 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 with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.



Readings and excerpts from the *Lectionary for Mass* ©1970, 1997, 1998  
Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., ©1997, 1981, 1968  
International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., and ©1964  
National Catholic Welfare Conference, Inc. Excerpts from the  
*Sacramentary* ©1969–1985 ICEL. Excerpts from *Living Liturgy* ©2001  
The Order of St. Benedict, Inc. Clip art ©1994, 1996 The Order of St.  
Benedict, Inc. All rights reserved.

## Third Sunday of Advent – December 13, 2009 – Good Shepherd Parish

### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

“Brothers and sisters: rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice,” says St. Paul in the [Second Reading](#). The word for rejoice in Latin is *gaudete*, so quite naturally this Sunday is called Gaudete Sunday. Why all this exultation? Are we finally getting a break from the somberness of Advent? Yes, but there is more to it than that. Remember that Advent is like a retreat that the worldwide Church is making. In this upcoming third week we will consider our lives in the context of the great beauty God has put in us and around us. Can you get yourself to think this way? One line in the [First Reading](#) puts it very well. Zephaniah says that the Lord “will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.” Because of you! Have you ever in your life thought that God might be singing because of you? Have you ever let your image of God expand that far? Have you ever let him, in the most profound sense of the word, be one who sings you into existence?

In one of the books of *Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, the children are taken back to the very moment of creation. They hear the voice of Aslan (the Christ figure) singing into the wilderness. When the voice goes high, birds, clouds, blue sky appear. At a certain lengthy turn of melody the mountains laboriously raise their heads. A low hum vibrates forth the depths of seas. Creation seems to be made out of melody. Maybe it is. I am no scientist, but have heard that two great scientific theories vie with each other to explain what the physical universe is composed of. Particles or waves, I think. Einstein and many others tried to reconcile them, but no luck. Maybe you have seen TV shows about “string theory” on PBS or elsewhere, a model that some scholars believe unites the two hypotheses. Instead of saying that particles or waves or uncertainty or whatever else are the basis of matter and force-fields and so on, some scientists instead postulate infinitesimal, ever changing, wriggling, string-like articles. By their dancing shapes these string circles generate (or constitute, or become, or whatever is the right way to say it) everything that is. One comparison is that these strings act a lot like sound acts. Like the vibrations that come forth from a violin string. I thought immediately of C. S. Lewis.

How about this for a possibility: God’s gladness sings out joyfully at every instant, and his song is the earth, the galaxies, the people and plants and chemicals and soaring hawks and encircling planets, droplets of dew and the heavy black holes, the youthful beauties, ancient wisdoms, and everything else that makes up all that exists. We are God’s song. Apply this, please, to Sunday’s [Gospel](#). People in long rows gather to be baptized in expectation of the Savior who is to come. Each segment (the crowd, the tax collectors, the soldiers) ask John the Baptist the exact same question: “Teacher, what should we do?” “Let your life sing,” he answers. Let it sing. Let your life be what it is: God’s joyous, interleaving, always consonant melody, sounding outwards in deepest joy.

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. St. Paul says that peace will guard our hearts and minds. The conditions? We must rejoice in the Lord always, be kind to all, lose anxiety, make all our requests known to God and thank God as though he has already granted the requests. It is a long list. Are you better at some than others? Which ones need improvement?
2. Maybe you rejoice when you are singing at Mass on Sunday. Are there other times during the week that you experience such joy? What makes you happy in the Lord?
3. “He will sing joyfully because of you.” This sentence paints a picture. What are some examples in the world about which you might say, “Listen, God is singing”?
4. “Do not fear the Lord is in our midst.” This reading says it twice. Have you ever remembered the presence of God in the middle of a crisis? What effect did it have on you?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen