



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Advent
December 13, 2015

To Be, and Not to Be

By Janel Esker

A priest friend prays the following prayer every morning as he gets out of bed: “You are God, and I am not. Thanks be to God!” What a wonderful way to begin the day! Now, if we could only remember that truth throughout the day.

We do tend to forget who we are and what our limits are. We unknowingly slip into God mode as we try to exercise complete control over our unpredictable lives and smoothly move into Savior mode as we try to fix someone else’s. We easily forget who is truly in control and who truly has healing power.

John the Baptist models such humility as he directs attention away from himself and to the coming Messiah. He could have easily claimed the title for himself, but he knew his limits, and he exhorted his followers to know theirs as well. He challenged tax collectors to remain honest in their occupation and soldiers to live with integrity. John didn’t ask them to do more, be more, or control more. Instead, he asked them to do what they’d been asked to do—no more, no less—but to do it righteously.

So on this Gaudete Sunday—this “Rejoice” Sunday—are we supposed to rejoice in our limitations? Exactly! It is precisely within our limited human condition that God came to be with us as Emmanuel. It is precisely within our limited human condition that we can experience God’s saving power and live out God’s love and mercy to others. We needn’t do more, be more, control more—we need to be exactly who we are and be that person as humbly and faithfully as possible.

“You are God, and we are not.” Thanks be to God indeed! †

A Word From Pope Francis



In the wonders that the Lord has fulfilled in Mary, She recognizes her Son’s manner and mode of conduct in salvation history. Overturning worldly judgments, destroying at all costs the idols of power, wealth and success, denouncing self-sufficiency, arrogance and secular messianism which distance people from God, the Marian Canticle professes that God takes pleasure in overturning ideologies and worldly hierarchies. He lifts up the humble, comes to the aid of the poor and the lowly, fills with goodness, with blessings and hope those who trust in his mercy.

—Homily on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, 2014

Sunday Readings

Zephaniah 3:14–18

“Be glad and exult with all your heart... The LORD has removed the judgment against you.”

Philippians 4:4–7

“The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all.”

Luke 3:10–18

“I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming.”



Lord, you are generous and kind to all your people. Instill within me a compassionate and generous heart that I may respond to my poor sisters and brothers near and far away.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

Exploring Catholic Identity: O Antiphons

By Diane M. Houdek

The final week of Advent, beginning with December 17, is characterized by the “O Antiphons,” most familiar to us from the ninth-century hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” These antiphons were originally used during the monastic

Evening Prayer (Vespers) of the Liturgy of the Hours, or Divine Office. Since Vatican II, they have served as the Acclamation before the Gospel (“Alleluia Verse”) for the Masses on these days. They address Jesus by a series of titles that connect

his coming to the great covenant in the Hebrew Scriptures and end with a petition. They are a poetic representation of the way in which Jesus fulfills and completes the promise made by God to our ancestors in faith.

Wisdom (Proverbs 8, Sirach 24)
**O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!**

Sacred Lord (Exodus 3:2–6; Isaiah 63:8–9, 11–12, 16)
**O Leader of the House of Israel,
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!**

Flower of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1; Revelation 22:16)
**O Root of Jesse’s stem,
sign of God’s love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!**

Key of David (Isaiah 22:20–24; Revelation 3:7)
**O Key of David, opening the gates of God’s eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!**

Radiant Dawn / Dayspring (Isaiah 60:19–20; Luke 1:78–79; John 8:12)
**O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in darkness
and in the shadow of death!**

King / Desire of Nations (Psalm 47; Jeremiah 10:7; Daniel 7:14)
**O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!**

Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)
**O Emmanuel, our King, and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!**



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What suffering, especially of others, can I lift up in prayer?
- How can reducing consumption and fulfilling my responsibilities eliminate forms of human poverty?

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 14–
December 19

Mon. *St. John of the Cross:*
Numbers 24:2–7, 15–17 / Matthew 21:23–27
Tue. *Advent Weekday:*
Zephaniah 3:1–2, 9–13 / Matthew 21:28–32
Wed. *Advent Weekday:*
Isaiah 45:6–8, 18, 21–25 / Luke 7:18–23

Thu. *Advent Weekday:*
Genesis 49:2, 8–10 / Matthew 1:1–17
Fri. *Advent Weekday:*
Jeremiah 23:5–8 / Matthew 1:18–25
Sat. *Advent Weekday:*
Judges 13:2–7, 24–25 / Luke 1:5–25