



3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it

PRAYER

Loving God, we give praise and thanks that you have sent your Son to be our light in the darkness of this world. Come and assist us to see your loving care and your light in the midst of our daily struggles. May you help us to bring the light of your love to the lives we meet daily. This we ask in the mystery of our God, the source of all life. Amen.

With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

READING

Again, ask a few people to read the Gospel text. Keep it slow! Take your time; remember that God wants to speak to you in these words.

Allow for a few minutes of silence.

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

Second Reading: 1 Thess. 5:16-24

Read the Text

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man came, sent by God.

His name was John.

He came as a witness,

as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light,

only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite

openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked, 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptizing if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptize with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

This is a Gospel about hope. John the Evangelist writes about the light that shines in the darkness and that cannot be extinguished. John the Baptist tells us that he is already among us, although we do not recognise him. This year it has been extremely difficult to find hope especially if we have lost someone dear to us through Covid-19. Maybe we have lost our work or our position. Maybe we have lost confidence in who we are, or maybe even in God.

Jesus comes in the midst of all this to offer hope. John preaches, 'It will change' Paul writes, 'He is faithful' and Isaiah says, 'Justice shall reign'. We really hope so, but do we believe this? Is our faith strong enough in us to allow us to believe this? How strong is our faith?

Can we help others to heal, to live again, to regain confidence in the birth that soon we will celebrate? Jesus Christ.

Do we really believe that Jesus is the light in the darkness of this moment and that no darkness shall ever overcome him or his love for us?

Lord, help our unbelief. Help us to be strong and confident in your love for us, so that we can reach out to others, who lack that strength of character and the confidence that you offer. Help us to bring hope into our world that is so broken.

Hope seen in the birth of a child, soon, at Christmas.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYER

Response: Come Lord Jesus

Help us to be your light to those who live in the darkness of addiction of any kind.

May we not judge but bring your healing presence to all we meet.

Come Lord Jesus

Help us to be your light in those whose loves are worn down by sickness, by the ill health of a child or a loved one. May they know your healing presence.

Come Lord Jesus.

Help us to be your light to those who live lives of service. May they always respond with hope and with courage.

Come Lord Jesus

Help us to bring your light to all who are homeless, especially children who need food, care and companionship.

Come Lord Jesus

Help us to be bring your light into lives that are lonely, for one reason or another. May we move them from despair to a life of hope and confidence in your goodness and nearness.

Come Lord Jesus.

FINAL THOUGHT

How can I bring God's light and hope into the lives of those I meet each day?