

Sunday and Feast Day Liturgical Notes for Priests and Deacons

Suggestions for Leading Worship



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RE: Liturgical Suggestions for the Third Sunday in Advent – Cycle A

Sunday date: December 15-16, 2007

Dear Fathers and Deacons,

An Overview...

An alternative name for this particular Sunday in Advent is Gaudete Sunday, to distinguish it from the more somber or sorrowful Advent Sundays. The name is taken from the Latin words of the Entrance Chant (Introit) from Mass on this day, taken from Phil 4:4: *Gaudete semper in Domino*, “Rejoice in the Lord always!”

The implication was often held in former times that Advent paralleled Lent in meaning. However, since the best understanding of Advent is not as a lesser Lent, the penitential practices for the rest of the Advent season have been removed focusing instead on the joyful anticipation of the two comings of the Lord. In reality the four Sundays of Advent present a unity so that the need to break this unity with some sense of more joy than the other Advent Sundays is largely unnecessary.

There is still present in this third Sunday the tension between the final coming of the Lord and the mystery of the incarnation. Only on December 17 comes the day in which the focus of Advent anticipation shifts from the final coming of the Lord toward the approaching birth at Bethlehem.

In today's Scriptures Isaiah speaks of the return of the exiles from the Exodus: a new movement toward freedom, from slavery to freedom; from blindness to sight; from deafness to a new hearing; from being dumb to having new words of wisdom. John's Gospel which illuminates the reading from Isaiah asks a question which is contemporary: are we looking for another Messiah? Or can we be satisfied with the one who has come among us?

Faith Sharing Questions...

1. Am I looking for another Messiah? Am I not satisfied with the coming of Jesus and the incarnation of God's love in Jesus Christ?
2. From what do I see society needing to be free?
3. In the Opening Prayer for the Third Sunday of Advent these words are used: *...remove the sadness that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope which his [Jesus'] presence will bestow...* What do you think the sadness is?

Some Considerations As You Prepare...

1. The Alternative Opening Prayer is recommended as the first Opening Prayer makes too explicit the "birthday of Jesus..." The Alternative Prayer also refers to hope, longing and the Lord's return at the end of time.
2. If the third form of the Penitential Rite is to be used, these compositions of the strophes may be helpful: Lord Jesus, you are the hoped for Redeemer of the world, Lord, have mercy; Lord Jesus, you are the sign of God's favor for all people, Christ, have mercy; Lord Jesus, you will come in glory to unite heaven and earth, Lord have mercy.
3. Continue to use the mandatory First Preface of Advent because of the eschatological focus.
4. For the Solemn Blessing, use either the Solemn Blessing for Advent; or the one from Ordinary Time III, or the Fifth Prayer Over the People, both of which speak of rejoicing.

Looking Ahead...

1. Make sure you have posted in your church the schedule for Christmas/New Year's.
2. The Vigil Mass of Christmas is meant to be a Vigil to be celebrated either in the afternoon or evening of Christmas Eve. The prayers for this Vigil Mass still speak of waiting and of keeping Vigil, asking that "*Christmas morning will find us at peace, ready to welcome the Lord...*" Preachers have a more difficult task than usual in preparation for homilies for Christmas Vigil and Christmas Day. The readings for the Vigil are different from the other three sets of readings for the Day. A preacher may use the same readings chosen from the three for Christmas Day on Christmas Day or may choose to use the complete three sets, i.e., the readings for Midnight; Morning; Day. However, it is not appropriate to use the Vigil readings for the Masses the next day, or to use the daytime readings for the Vigil.
3. In the midst of Christmas, don't forget to think about Easter! Have your Easter Candle ordered already: Lent comes quickly this coming year!

Sample Prayers of the Faithful for the Third Advent Sunday

Priest: To the God of hope we offer our prayers of need:

Deacon (or if there is no deacon, another reader):

1. For the fulfillment of the Gospel mission of Christ through the ministry of the Church in the world, we pray to the Lord...
2. For new hope for peace in a world torn by hatred and division; for reconciliation as the fruit of justice, we pray to the Lord...
3. For those who labor under physical and mental anguish; for those who desire the healing of God yet continue to suffer; for their encouragement and healing, we pray to the Lord...
4. For our parish during these Advent days; may we be freed of the pressure and frantic pace of commercialism in this season, we pray to the Lord...
5. For families that are under the stress of divorce, financial worries and irreconcilable differences; that they may not lose hope, we pray to the Lord...
6. For those who have died; that God may remember them all with eternal life, we pray to the Lord...
7. In peace and in silence, we offer our prayers to the Lord...

[pause, the presider alone concludes]

Priest: Loving God of all times and seasons,
Hear our Advent prayers
and keep open our hearts for the coming of your Son,
the one who is, who was and who is to come,
forever and ever.
Amen