

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 of Advent – Cycle B

Sunday date: December 13-14, 2008

Dear Fathers and Deacons,

An Overview...

On this Sunday there are a number of Scriptural themes present: joy that the Lord is indeed near; the ministry of St. John the Baptist; the longing for the final revelation of the Lord; and the role of Mary in the promised Incarnation. Keeping with the Advent calendar which keeps the first focus of the Advent season on the eschatological emphasis, the themes of joy and the role of John the Baptist predominate.

The One to come after John is mightier, the One whose path John is to ready. John renounces the titles of Messiah, Elijah and “the prophet.” The text of the First Reading from Isaiah coincides with the Gospel as it offers the text of one of the famous “Servant Songs.” This text deeply influenced the understanding of who the Christ is and fills out our sense of the ministry of Jesus.

While this Sunday is sometimes called “Gaudete” [“rejoice”] Sunday (a reference occasioned by the first word of the Latin Entrance Antiphon, and which is further emphasized in the Opening Prayer, the optional rose-colored vestments and candle on the Advent wreath, as well as the Biblical texts) please note that *The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* refer to the whole of Advent as “ a season of joyful and spiritual expectation [#39].

In introducing the Liturgy this weekend, do not suggest that this Sunday has a special character of “rejoicing.” The entire Advent season reflects this growing sense of joy throughout. Use the language of joy in that it reflects this belief.

Faith Sharing Questions...

1. How do you experience *joy* in your life and what does this say to you about God?
2. The reading from 1 Thessalonians says *the one who calls you is faithful...* How do you find God to be faithful?
3. How is your Advent season going? What is different about how you are living your life because of this season?

Some Other Considerations As You Prepare...

1. For the Penitential Rite, here is a sample text: “Lord Jesus, you are the promised Messiah who brings hope in darkness, Lord have mercy; Christ Jesus, you are the faithful one of Israel, Christ have mercy; Lord Jesus, you will come again in glory to save the world, Lord have mercy”
2. Keeping the eschatological focus, the use the Alternative Opening Prayer is the more recommended.
3. The Preface remains that of Advent I.
4. Note that there may be some difficulty in using the word “birthday” in the prayer after communion. Christmas may be seen as only a past event, a “birthday party” with no reference to Christ’s coming as a present event. The words *coming, manifestation, or incarnation* substituted for this term would expand our thinking about Christmas.
5. The use of the Solemn Blessing of Advent is recommended. Or you may choose to use the “Prayer over the People” no. I or no. V.

Looking Ahead...

1. On the 17th of December [Wednesday of the coming week], the switch to the second principal focus of Advent occurs. From this point on the Advent weekdays are intended to serve to prepare more directly for our remembrance of the Lord’s birth. Advent Preface II is used at Mass on and after December 17. The famous “O” Antiphons occur as part of Evening Prayer in the celebration of the *Liturgy of the Hours*.
2. Note that there is a *Blessing of a Christmas Tree* in the *Book of Blessings*, at nos. 1570-1596.
3. The entire diocesan Liturgical Calendar for Cycle B [Advent 2008-Christ the King 2009] is available at the Office of Worship section of the diocesan website [www.diobr.org/worship]

SAMPLE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Priest: For the hope of the world, let us pray to the Lord:

1. For Benedict our Pope and Robert our Bishop; for the fulfillment of the Gospel mission of Christ through the evangelizing ministry of the Church, we pray to the Lord...
2. For God's justice and peace to spring up in a world torn by hatred and division; for reconciliation as the fruit of justice, we pray to the Lord...
3. For the men and women religious who have served our country, our diocese and our parish over these last 100 years; for those religious who continue to serve the church joyously and unselfishly, we pray to the Lord...
4. For those who suffer in mind and body; for healing and renewed life for those burdened with many worries, we pray to the Lord...
5. That all those who have died may experience the light of Christ, breaking the bonds of death, we pray to the Lord...
6. In peace and in silence we offer to the Lord our prayers of need.

[pause for silence, the presider alone concludes]

Priest: Grant to your people, O God,
the hope of our prayer;
we ask through Jesus Christ
who is, who was and who is to come,
now and forever.
Amen.