

Third Sunday of Advent 2019

DO NOT FEAR!

FROM THE READINGS

FIRST READING: Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.
Isaiah 35:3-4

SECOND READING: "You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another."
James 5:8-9

GOSPEL: Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them."
Matthew 11:4-5

REFLECTIONS

It is time for patience, courage and confidence in what God is doing:

More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat." (Mk 6:37).

Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel 49

In the face of evil, suffering and sin, the only response possible for a disciple of Jesus is the gift of self, even of one's own life, in imitation of Christ; it is an attitude of service.

Pope Francis, World Youth Day Krakow, Poland, Jul 29, 2016.

The common good requires "a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters."

Pope Francis, On Care for Our Common Home 158

We must often feel weary and tired but God brings us through these things.

Mary MacKillop, 1874

GOD IS FOREVER COMMITTED TO HEALING AND HOLDING US

On Tuesday morning I was blessing the Advent Wreath at our school assembly. The headmaster had explained the meaning of the four coloured candles, one to be lit each week before Christmas. ‘What is most important of all,’ he stressed, ‘is that our hearts, too, should shine out for each other. We should all be candles of love for those around us.’ Now it happened that I was a little depressed that morning. After many draining demands, the prospect of another long day’s parish-work was getting me down. Having said the blessing, I was sitting among the gathered parents. I had my head in my hands, my shoulders hunched. For some reason I looked up. Right in front of me, tiny as a tot, her arms stretched as wide as the sky, stood a smiling three-year-old. ‘Fr Daniel,’ she whispered, ‘can I give you a hug?’ I swear I will carry that memory to my grave. It was a glimpse of pure, spontaneous grace. I had not known Rachel before. Her teacher, Catherine, had not urged her on. On a dark and cold December morning, Rachel, like an Advent candle, brought light and warmth into my worried heart. I’m reflecting, this evening, on that special moment. I realise that this is the only way God can reach us, touch us, console us. Since the first Christmas, God is forever committed to healing and holding us through each other.

Daniel O’Leary, Prism of Love



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- 1. From these readings and reflections,** what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
- 2. Imagine** God healing you and holding you, when you are hurt or weary.
- 3. Remember** a time when comfort and encouragement came to you unexpectedly.
- 4. Express** a hope or intention for the future.

CLOSING PRAYER

Suddenly I am a child again

Awakening from a deep sleep,
trusting a hand
held out in the darkness,
inviting me to rise and live.

Suddenly I am a child again
allowing eternal questions
to rise in my soul,
asking the questions aloud, aloud
in silence, in silence, in silence
and finally, a silence that is loud.
No longer afraid
to seek the mystery, questioning.
No longer afraid of eternal questions.

Suddenly I am not afraid of what I do not know;
unafraid of what I do not understand.
Suddenly I am delighted
to take the hand of an unseen God,
leading me through a comforting darkness
in which I do not see the stars
but feel them rising in my heart.

Suddenly I am a child
unashamed and unafraid
to reach out in the darkness for a hand,
Your hand, O my God.

Suddenly I am an awakened child. Amen.

Richard Becher, 600 Blessings and Prayers from around the world



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Acknowledgements: *Daniel O'Leary, Prism of Love*, Dublin: Columba Press, 2003, 79;
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of the Gospel' *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49; Pope Francis, *World Youth Day Krakow*, Poland,
Jul 29, 2016; Sheila Cassidy, Good Friday People, London: Darton, Longman and Todd,
1991; Macrina Wiederkehr, *The Song of the Seed*, New York: Harper Collins, 1997, 87; St Mary of
the Cross MacKillop, in *St Mary MacKillop 1874, Daily Thoughts Perpetual Calendar*, updated 2012,
June 5 www.sosj.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/12631.pdf. Richard Becher, 600 Blessings
and Prayers from around the world.