



a Kendall Hunt Company

Third Sunday of Advent, Year C, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



Junior High Session

Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Luke 3:10-18

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Come, Lord Jesus, awaken our hearts to the call of conversion,
so that we may be ready for your coming.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

On this third Sunday of Advent we wait with joyful anticipation for the coming of Christ. We are called to reform our lives in order to make way for Jesus. And we trust that God rejoices over those who turn back to goodness and love.

Provide each person with a strip of paper and a pencil. Also a small trashcan will be needed in the center of the meeting space. To begin the session, invite the young people to reflect on those areas of their lives that are in need of conversion. Take a few moments to silently reflect on the following questions:

- What keeps you from treating others with care and respect?
- What gets in the way of your relationship with Jesus?
- Call to mind those attitudes and behaviors that you would like to change because they damage your relationships within your family, with your friends, and your relationship with God.

Suggest that the young people jot down their responses to the questions on the strip of paper that has been provided. Explain that this exercise is to help them release the things that keep them in darkness. Emphasize that no one else will see their responses.

To symbolize their new start, invite each young person to come forward and tear their strip of paper in small pieces and dispose of it in the trash. (You may want to play instrumental music at this time.)

Conclude. Everybody makes mistakes and at times we may be led astray. The joyful news is that we can have a new start. God always calls us back with mercy and love. This third Sunday of Advent helps to direct us back to God.



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Listening to the Word of God

In the first reading from the Old Testament listen to the prophet rejoice.

Read Zephaniah 3:14-18a.

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- What is the prophet Zephaniah grateful for?
- How does the prophet speak of God?
- What is the tone of the reading?

In the gospel reading John the Baptist tells the people what they must do. Listen to what that is.

Read Luke 3:10-18.

Allow for silence.

- What good news does John the Baptist proclaim?
- Why does the crowd ask what they should do?
- How does the John reply?
- When the crowd asks if John the Baptist might be the messiah, how does the John respond?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

The Old Testament reading today proclaims joy and gratitude for the saving presence of God. There is no fear, only trust in the goodness of God. In today's first reading Zephaniah speaks of the return of a sinful people to God. The people rejoice and sing praises to the Holy One. They are reconciled with God, and God rejoices over them.

In the gospel reading, John the Baptist touches the hearts of listeners with his preaching on the coming judgment of God. People from all walks of life come forward asking, "What are we to do?" John responds by challenging the people to examine their lives and see if they need to make changes in order to be more compassionate and just. John the Baptist proclaims the Good News to the crowd that, "One who is more powerful than I is coming." And he makes clear that moral conversion is necessary in order to prepare for the coming of the messiah.

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as "Gaudete Sunday." Gaudete is a Latin word meaning rejoice. On this Sunday we shout aloud and sing for joy, because God is in our



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midst.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- What must you do to be ready for the coming of Christ?
- How can you show your appreciation for the goodness of God?
- Do you have reason to rejoice this third Sunday of Advent? Explain.

If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Moral conversion prepares for the coming of Christ.

God created human beings with openness to goodness and truth. We also are created with freedom and the inner voice of conscience. Every person yearns for union with God. That inner longing and the desire for happiness can lead people to make choices that are good and true. Even those people who have not accepted the good news of Jesus are capable of determining what is good and what is evil and act accordingly.

Catholics believe that moral conversion is possible for all and needed by all. Moral conversion is the process of becoming the good people that God created us to be. We are on a faith journey. Along the way changes may need to be made in order for us to reflect the goodness of God. This process of conversion happens throughout our daily lives. Signs of moral conversion are when we do such things as ask for forgiveness, admit our faults, grow in our concern for the poor, and work for justice.

Moral conversion is a life-long process of acknowledging our faults and turning back to God. When we do this we have much reason to rejoice, because God welcomes us and rejoices over our return.

- What helps you to trust in and listen to your inner voice?
- What signs of conversion do you see at this time in your life?
- Can you rely on the mercy and love of God?

The Gospel in Life

Spread joy this week. Be filled with gratitude for the saving presence of God in your life.