

## Cry Out with Joy, for the Lord is Near

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** Zep 3:14-18a

| **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** Phil 4:4-7

| **Gospel:** Lk 3:10-18

GROW: Although spontaneous outbursts of joy are not part of our liturgy, today's readings alert us that we have much reason to rejoice. Even in times of anxiety, we can rely on the words of St. Paul, who writes that we can rest assured that "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard [our] hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." As we prepare for his coming during this Advent season, we don't need to leap out of our pews and make a show of our praise (but go for it, if that's your style!). However, in our hearts and in our prayer, we can follow the psalmist's lead and "cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel." We can praise God in many ways, through fervent prayer, simple acts of kindness and, as John the Baptist did so well, sharing the Good News.

GO: "What should we do?" The crowds asked John the Baptist a deceptively simple question many of us wrestle with today. How do we prepare for Christ's coming? How should we spend the next hour, the day, the next year, the next five? John the Baptist answers without reservation: Share what you have. Don't be greedy. Do not falsely accuse others. In other words, get it together! The Lord is coming. Advent is a wonderful time to do just that, and St. Paul reminds us that we don't have to know all the answers. "The Lord is near," he writes, "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God." Last week, the readings encouraged us to discern what is truly valuable in our lives as Christians. Today's readings encourage us to ask the Lord: "What should we do?" Just as John the Baptist showed the people how to prepare for Christ's coming, the Lord shows us how to live out and share our faith through the Scriptures and in the silence of prayer.

ACTIONS: Remember the last time you felt unadulterated joy? As we move through Advent, we can reawaken a sense of childlike joy as we prepare to celebrate Christ among us. As you light the Advent candle, take time to share with one another something that gave you joy within the past week.