

### 3rd Sunday of Advent – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2024

| Headings                                   | Gospel (Luke 3:10 -13)   | 1 <sup>st</sup> Reading (Zephaniah 3:14 -18)   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading (Philippians 4:4 - 7)  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Context</b>                             | In the early church Advent was a penitential season in preparation for Christmas. The third Sunday was a day of rejoicing and penitential practices were put aside. The penitential aspect of Advent has been dropped but the call to rejoice is still present in today's liturgy.                   | The prophet speaks of a restoration God will bring about for his people in the future. He urges them to rejoice and shout for joy in anticipation of God's action. God will renew them in his love. Jesus is the one who will fulfill these promises.  | Paul wrote this letter from prison to encourage the Christians at Philippi. The tone of the letter is joyful, despite the fact that he is in prison. He exhorts his readers to be joyful, even in the face of the most trying circumstances of life.   |
| <b>Key verse</b>                           | <b>“I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am ...he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”.</b>   | <b>“The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult with joy over you. He will renew you by his love”.</b>   | <b>“I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord, what I want is your happiness”.</b>  |
| <b>Key themes/ messages</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John directs his message to all everybody.</li> <li>• He calls for spiritual renewal. It will entail a return to social justice, honesty and generosity.</li> <li>• Like the farmer, God will separate the righteous from the wicked at the end.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The people of Israel are to shout aloud because the Lord is in their midst.</li> <li>• For us the message is that we should be glad for the coming of Jesus</li> <li>• The reading suggests that his actions will be those of a Bridegroom - a title often applied to Jesus.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the opening verse the call to rejoice is repeated for the sake of emphasis.</li> <li>• Paul urges his readers to have no anxiety but to turn to God in prayer.</li> <li>• Prayer will protect their minds from doubts and disturbances that weaken faith.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Questions/ application to our lives</b> | <p>How does the message of John, the Baptist resonate with Christians today?</p> <p>How would you describe the spiritual renewal that is needed in the Church today?</p> <p>Can you suggest some steps that could be taken to achieve a spiritual renewal?</p>                                       | <p>How has Jesus fulfilled the promises made in this passage?</p> <p>How would you explain to a non-Catholic that God is in our midst?</p> <p>Do Christians today need to be encouraged because of opposition? If so, how can this be done?</p>  | <p>Today “positive thinking” is often recommended as a remedy for anxiety. What does Paul recommend and how does it differ from “positive thinking”?</p> <p>Have you tried to practise what Paul recommends in this passage? If so, what effect has it had on your prayer?</p>                                   |
| <b>Further reading</b>                     | Catechism 523 – 524, 535, 1095, , 2447   | Catechism 430 – 435, 722, 2676,  | Catechism 1803, 1839, 1832, 2633   |