

Picture sitting on a patio in the early morning hours, just before dawn. The sky is still dark, the air crisp, and everything feels quiet, waiting for the sun to break through. That moment—suspended between night and day—is a lot like Advent: a time of waiting, longing, and hope.

And on this Gaudete Sunday, the Church invites us to notice the first hints of light and to rejoice, because even before the sun rises fully, the darkness is already retreating. The Lord is near.

Isaiah promises, “*The wilderness shall rejoice and blossom.*” Imagine that: a dry, barren desert suddenly coming alive with color and fragrance. The weak are strengthened. The fearful find courage. The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and sorrow flees.

The psalm echoes the same joy-filled hope: God feeds the hungry, lifts the bowed down, and watches over the vulnerable. God isn’t distant. He is close: in our joys, our struggles, and even our deserts.

So, how do we live in this dawning light?

St. James gives us simple wisdom: “*Be patient... until the coming of the Lord.*” Like a farmer who trusts the early and late rains, patience for a Christian isn’t passive waiting. It’s joyful confidence, the steady belief that God is already at work, even when we cannot yet see the harvest.

Turning to the Gospel, we meet John the Baptist in prison. In the darkness of uncertainty, he asks of Jesus, “*Are you the one who is to come?*”

And Jesus doesn’t answer with a theory or a speech: He points to the evidence of God’s joy breaking in: *The blind see. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. The poor hear good news.*

These are Isaiah’s promises, fulfilled in real lives, real bodies, real hope. God keeps His word. Joy is already sprouting.

Think for a moment about the deserts in your own life: the dryness of illness, the silence of loneliness, the worry that clouds your vision. Even there, even now, God can bring streams of joy.

I once met a young mother whose child suffered from a chronic illness. Days were long; nights were often sleepless; hope sometimes felt paper-thin. But each evening, before turning out the lights, she would whisper a fragile hope that came from within her: “*Waters shall break forth in the wilderness.*”

One night, after an especially difficult day, her daughter managed a small laugh for the first time in weeks. “It felt like water in the desert,” she told me. And slowly, she began to notice other unexpected moments of grace like that laugh, little streams that softened her desert and rekindled her joy.

**This Advent, let’s turn our waiting into joyful action.
When frustration rises, pause and pray: “Lord, you are near:
strengthen my heart.”**

Reach out to someone who needs encouragement.

Reflect each day: “Where is God bringing light into my desert?”

Watch for His work: the graces, the kindnesses, the unexpected joys that prove He is near.

4 Third Sunday Advent (Gaudete Sunday)

Be patient like the farmer.

Be courageous like the prophets.

Be faithful like John.

Our deserts can bloom.

Sorrow can flee.

And everlasting joy can take root in our hearts.

This week, don't just wait for Christmas—live it.

Be a stream in someone else's desert.

Be the joy someone has been hoping for.

Rejoice, because the Lord is truly near.