

A decorative header featuring a warm, bokeh-lit background with lit candles, pinecones, and evergreen branches. The word "ENGAGING" is written in a simple, grey, sans-serif font at the top.

ENGAGING

Advent

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



AWAKENING JOY



Have you ever been reunited with a friend after a long separation? My best friend lives on the opposite side of the country. I'm godmother to her daughter and over the years have gotten to know most of her extended family. Life being what it is, I typically only see them once a year. When a trip is planned, my anticipation is palpable. The knowledge that I'm going to see them – and soon – fills me with joy. Even though I've not yet arrived, I'm confident in the future. I know I'm going to be reunited with people I love, and soon.

This Advent, knowing that Christ is coming ought to fill us with joy. I'm joyful in the anticipation of seeing my friend because we have a relationship, a relationship forged over many years of ups and downs.

One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is that we can really know God. We can encounter Jesus Christ and enter into a friendship with Him. Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said, "I do not believe that a man can love anything he cannot get his arms around. The cosmos is too big and too bulky. That is why God had to become a child in order that we might embrace Him in our heart."

As we anticipate the Christmas season, we recall a God who became one of us that we might know Him. God's love is real. It's incarnate, not only 2,000 years ago, but here, now, today. We can know God in our prayer, in the sacraments, and in our concrete acts of love, service, and generosity. This week let these encounters fill us with joy!

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CANDLESIDE CONVERSATION

- Who is a friend that brings you joy? Why are you so joyful when you're with him or her?
- Where do you look for God? Where do you expect to find Him?
- When you hear that God wants to meet with you like a person meets with their friend, how does that make you feel? How can you grow in your friendship with God?

/// REJOICE IN THE LORD always! (Phil 4:4)...God has drawn near to everyone...joy is the heart of the Gospel of Christmas. As a Mother, the Church knows the difficulties and sufferings that are part of the human condition. She knows well that in the life of many peoples and persons sadness prevails over joy, anxiety over hope. It is particularly to these men and women that the Christmas message is proclaimed in a preferential way, because 'Christ brought the good news of salvation to the poor, to prisoners freedom, and to those in sorrow, joy.' He is the genuine liberator of the human person ... today humanity yearns especially for the gifts of joy and peace. It is our mission as believers, with the eloquence of love expressed in deeds, to everyday stir up a world reconciled by love and animated by divine joy. **///**

—Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *Seek That Which is Above*

ADVENT Q & A

Q: Why is the third candle on the Advent wreath pink?

A: The preparatory season of Advent has been celebrated in the Church since the fifth century. Originally, it mirrored Lent as a more intense time of fasting and penance. Like Lent, which has a Laetare Sunday anticipating Easter more joyfully, Advent has a similar "break." On the third Sunday of Advent, the Church celebrates Gaudete Sunday. "Gaudete" comes from the Latin word meaning "rejoice." We hear it prominently in the first reading as the Scriptural tone shifts. The rose color in the candle and Mass vestments symbolically reminds us that, in the midst of a season of preparation and anticipation, we wait with joyful hope. There is no doubt that Christ is coming; there is no doubt that He has, in many senses, already arrived.



KEEP WATCH IN WONDER

This week awaken a spirit of rejoicing!

15 MINUTES:

Make a video of each family member singing his or her favorite Christmas song. Send the videos to grandparents to spread the joy!

1 HOUR:

Look back on old Christmas photos and share funny Christmas memories.

AN AFTERNOON:

Invite friends over for a cookie decorating party.

AN *Advent Prayer*

Come, Lord Jesus, as we keep watch in wonder.

Come, Lord Jesus, as we prepare your way with hope.

Come, Lord Jesus, as we rejoice in your light.

Come, Lord Jesus, as you awaken our hearts to your life.

Amen.