



ADVENT IN THE VALLEY

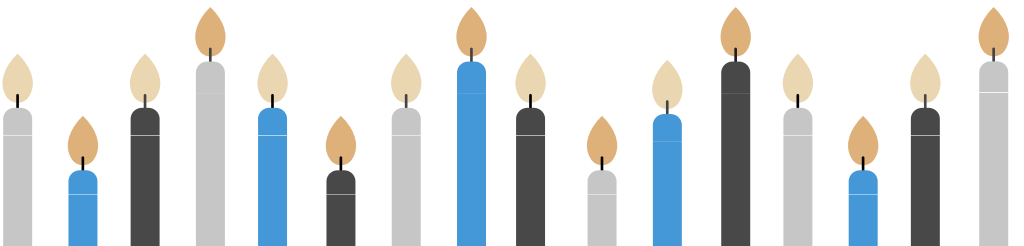
WEEK 3: JOY

As we begin, we light the first, second, and third Advent candles and say,

**Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
A light no darkness can extinguish.**

Today we light the third candle, the candle for Joy. It reminds us that Jesus brings joy into our lives and asks us to bring joy into the lives of everyone around us.

Let us pray,
Christ our Joy,
Brighten our homes with your presence.
Clear our vision so that we can see you
in the lives of people around us.
Help us to make the things we do
an opportunity to spread your joy.
We await your coming with delight.
Amen.



*"When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask Him, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"
Matthew 11:2*

Week Three Reflections from Canon Susan Clifford

What did John the Baptist mean when he asked: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" John was in prison when he asked that question. Herod had arrested John because he had been critical of Herod for divorcing his wife and unlawfully taking Herodias, the wife of his brother. Surely Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, but now John was unsure. Jesus was not what John expected of a Messiah. Jesus' message was different from his. Less fiery. More instructive. Jesus' lifestyle was also different. John was more austere. Jesus ate and drank and hung out with tax-collectors, prostitutes, and people of questionable character. Where was the Messiah that John expected?

When Treasury agents want to learn to identify counterfeit \$100 bills, they spend their time looking at legitimate currency. They take \$100 bills and study them carefully, looking at them with magnifying glasses, finding the magnetic strips that are in the new bills, looking for the watermarks, checking the colour of the ink, observing what happens when the bill is marked with a marker. There's only one true \$100, all the rest are counterfeits. Why don't they bother studying the different types of counterfeits? Because they're so familiar with the real thing that they know it when they see it.

John wondered whether Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus answered, look what I have done: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead return to life, and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor." Jesus answered, in effect, "If you observe what I'm doing, you'll get your answer." Or, "You'll know it when you see it."

Questions for further reflection:

1. What is your expectation of Jesus? Does he fulfil that expectation?
2. How do you recognize Jesus at work in your life? What do you observe him doing?
3. Do you have any doubt that Jesus is the Messiah? Ask God to strengthen your faith.