

## What Should We Do to Prepare? 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent (Year C)

### **Zephaniah 3:14-18—The Coming of the King to Daughter Zion**

1. Daughter of Zion: personification of the city of Jerusalem (3:14)
2. Forgiveness of Sins: “the LORD has taken away the judgments against you” (3:15)
3. Coming of the King: “the King of Israel, the LORD is in your midst” (3:15)

### **Isaiah 12—The Canticle of Zion’s Joy**

1. Jerusalem: “Sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion” (12:6)
2. The LORD: “for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel” (12:6)

### **Philippians 4:4-7—The Lord is Near**

1. Rejoice: “rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice!” (4:4)

### **Luke 3:10-18—What Should We Do to Prepare?**

1. John the Baptist: prepare not simply by repenting, but by *almsgiving* and *justice*
2. Crowds: “What then shall we do?” (3:10)
  - a. Clothing: “share with him who has none”
  - b. Food: “do likewise”
3. Tax Collectors: “What shall we do?” (3:12)
  - a. Extortion: “collect no more than is appointed you” (3:13)
4. Soldiers: “What should we do?” (3:14)
  - a. Theft: “rob no one by violence”
  - b. False Witness: “or by false accusation”
  - c. Covetousness: “be content with your wages”

### **The Living Tradition**

Ambrose of Milan: The Baptist gave a fitting response to each kind of people. To the tax collectors he said that they should not exact payment beyond what was appointed. To the soldiers, that they should not make false accusations or rob anyone, by which he meant that their pay was fixed, so that wanting to have more, they could not resort to plunder. These and other precepts are appropriate for all occupations, and the practice of compassion is shared. Thus it is a common precept that the basic necessities of life must be provided for all occupations, all ages, and all people. Neither the tax collector nor the soldier is exempted, neither the farmer nor the townsman, neither the rich man nor the pauper—all are commanded in common to give to the one who does not have. Compassion is the fullness of the virtues and therefore the form of the perfect virtue is placed before all. (Ambrose, *On the Gospel of Luke*, 2.77; trans. in A. Just, p. 63)

### **The Catechism of the Catholic Church**

*The works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in

his spiritual and bodily necessities...The *corporal works of mercy* consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, *giving alms to the poor* is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity. (CCC 2447, citing Luke 3:11)

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C)

1. What do you think of Zephaniah’s prophecy of coming of the King of Israel? What parallels are there between it and the Annunciation to Mary (Luke 1)?

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2. What is distinctive about Luke’s account of John the Baptist’s ministry? Why is it important to supplement the sacramental act of baptism with moral acts of almsgiving and justice?

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3. What corporal works of mercy can *you* engage in in order to prepare for the feast of Christmas?

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### For Further Reading

1. Arthur A. Just, Jr. *Luke*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament III. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003. Pp. 62-63
2. Pablo Gadenz. *The Gospel of Luke*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. Pp. 85-86