

Cycle C

Third Sunday of Advent

Lectionary #9

Reading I: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Like other prophets, the prophet Zephaniah delivers a message of both warning and comfort. In today's passage, Zephaniah tells the people to *shout for joy and be glad* because the Lord is removing all judgment against them. On this Third Sunday of Advent, **joy** is evident because the period of waiting and preparations is almost over and the great **joy** of welcoming and celebrating the Lord's Incarnation is just days away.

Reading 2: Philippians 4:4-7

Saint Paul continues to set the tone for this **joyful** Third Sunday of Advent. At the very beginning of this passage, Saint Paul calls the people to rejoice and repeats this emphasis on the **joy** that is ours in Jesus. The message from Saint Paul in this letter to the Philippians is this: Whatever our circumstances are, nothing can change the fact that we are loved by God and have reason to rejoice because we have been created in the love of God in Christ. This Third Sunday calls us to be aware of the fact that we are about to celebrate God becoming one of us to illustrate just how much God loves us.

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

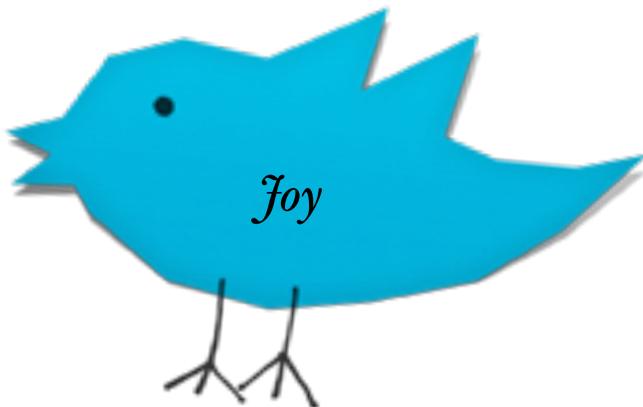
John the Baptist, a stern figure, is about to deliver the message of great **joy**. Both John the Baptist and Jesus will call the people to be **joyful**—they are to continue seeking to improve their lives, but should also be **joyful** and grateful for what they have.

Christians are called to live lives of gratitude. Oftentimes, people can get caught up in wants and can forget to be grateful for what they already have. We are certainly called to improve our lives, but by overemphasizing things that are external, we can forget the **joy** that lives within us.

build. plant. grow.
the word this week



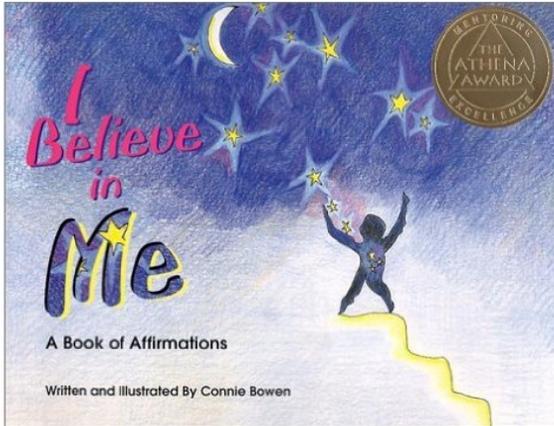
advent



lectionary
reading



children's
story



I Believe in Me: A Book of Affirmations

Written by Connie Bowen

Illustrated by Connie Bowen

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character
education
activity

I Believe in Me

In *I Believe in Me*, children learn to believe in themselves by developing a type of self-talk that can allow them to seek the **joy** that resides within them because of the Holy Spirit. Throughout this book, a silhouetted figure is present in each illustration to represent the Holy Spirit that lives within us. As a book of affirmations, this story gives children the opportunity to recognize, cultivate, and speak the truth that is within themselves.

Look Inside

Step One: Provide each student with a clear acrylic container and art supplies so that they can decorate the container as a representation of themselves. You should create a model so that they can see that the decorations should be done in a way that makes it possible to see inside the container.

Step Two: Give the students strips of paper and have them write different affirmations that they heard in the book *I Believe in Me*.

Step Three: Invite the students to look at each affirmation individually, and then have them read them out loud before placing them into the container. Store these containers in a place that is accessible for students to return to when they are having a difficult day.

**Find a place inside where
there is joy, and the joy will
burn out the pain.
-Joseph Campbell**

**Joy is the simplest
form of gratitude.**
-Karl Barth



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Make a list of the affirmations that you heard in the story *I Believe in Me* and share them with your family at home. Ask your parents to help you rewrite the affirmations so that they are more personalized and specific to you!

With your parent's permission, ask if there is a way that you can put these affirmations on your bedroom wall or bathroom mirror so that you can be reminded of the wonderful things about yourself.

Look Feel Know Act

When you have the opportunity, watch little children when they are smiling and laughing and determine the source of their **joy**. Sometimes just being around other people or being in the midst of God's creation has the ability to bring **joy**. **Joy** is something that resides within each human being and is made known to the outside world through smiles or laughter. When you see people smiling and laughing, recognize God in the **joy** residing within each person.

Both the Scripture readings for today and the book *I Believe in Me* encourage us to dig deep within and to see ourselves as God sees us. Encouraging children to use positive self-talk is a way to help them learn to stay in touch with that joy that sometimes gets overlooked in today's society, where wants and stresses get in the way of experiencing true joy.



**closing
tool**

Lord God, grant me a joyful heart, a heart that is full of love for you and for the people you place in my path. May I joyfully serve you by serving them and may I do all of this filled with gratitude and awe. Amen.



**Santa Clara
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