



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: JOY

December 17, 2023

LITANY OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

One: Ancestors of Advent, we call upon you in this season of waiting, of journey, and creation-time.

All: Your story is our story, your songs we still sing, your silence sits like a friend beside ours.

One: On this third week of Advent, we gather around this wreath, hand in hand like Mary and Elizabeth,

All: welcoming in the joy of two cousins meeting womb to womb.

(light third candle)

One: May we call on such jubilation to awaken us into worship.

All: Come, let us magnify the greatness of God with this ritual's delight. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: O Maker of All Moods, forgive us for the ways we hustle, bargain, and settle for counterfeit versions of joy.

All: For the ways we've dampened its aliveness in ourselves and others, for the ways we've not let it in.

One: Help us to discover that joy is worth the risk, and how what we put in its place leads us astray.

All: O God, teach us the power of joy—where nothing and no one can take it away. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Spirit of the Living God, you show us how true joy is not weaponized to diminish grief or melancholy. Rather, it makes room for it all to belong in your presence. Joy is not frivolous, nor a luxury, nor a distraction from what matters. It is the Good News that holds the wholeness of life, all of us, inside its realness. In true joy we find its worth in love, which is both the cost and the gift of living. Help us to join heart to heart, to consider it all joy. Amen.

GRACE UPON GRACE.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

O Great Magnifier, you have showed us how in your joy there is safety and sanctuary. As Elizabeth offered her home and her witness, Mary found her voice and what it means to rejoice—even in the midst of danger and unknowing. May what we gather here together today, be offered up in joy. May these gifts be used to widen the refuge our ministries provide and give a landing place for us all to come as we are and belong. Amen.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Divine Delight, in you there is still joy yet to be imagined, not yet lived, not yet felt. We haven't sucked your joy to the rind, not yet. There is juice that is left for us yet, yes God! May we savor every drop of your belovedness and take it in like healing medicine. May this community be a beacon of joy, that offers not just your grace, but your grace upon grace to all we meet. Amen.

These worship resources were written by the Rev. Elyse Berry, who serves as the Associate for Advocacy and Leadership Development for the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHSM) of the United Church of Christ.