

DECEMBER 11, 2016



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



ISAIAH 35:1-6A, 10

PSALM 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

JAMES 5:7-10

MATTHEW 11:2-11

REFLECTION

When I was in high school and college, the time leading up to Christmas Time also coincided with the end of the semester and final exams. I remember visiting the chapel on campus that was decorated with shades of violet with the wreath at the center counting the weeks until Christmas Time. The quiet simplicity of Advent contrasted greatly with the commotion that was going on inside of me. I sat there, tired, frazzled, and hoping I could just make it through another day of exams. It seemed everyone else was all ready for Christmas, but I just wasn't feeling it. Wasn't I supposed to feel happy? I felt parched and dry, like the desert imagery mentioned in Isaiah. Today is called Gaudete Sunday, which in Latin means, "Rejoice." Sometimes we confuse "rejoicing" with "being happy," but they are not the same. Happiness is fleeting; it comes and goes. To act happy when we're not happy is to be untrue to ourselves. But joy is something that can sustain us even in the midst of trial and adversity. It's that spark of light inside of us that perks up when we close our eyes and tell ourselves, "Just one more final exam, and this too shall pass!" Rejoice! There is hope. God is with us!



Home Alone is a classic holiday film in which Kevin McAllister gets left behind at home and fends off two bungling burglars while his family vacations in Paris. Pop some popcorn, put on some warm jammies, and laugh your way through this surprisingly poignant film.

ACTION

Trying to find just the right balance in life can be tricky. Even when we are conscious of not allowing ourselves to become overcommitted, the ebb and flow of life sometimes makes for busy stretches of time when we lose that sense of balance. This is why it's all the more important to nurture a deep interior life, to create good habits that help us through tough times when we're just not "feeling it." Going to bed on time, eating well, exercising, praying, and allowing unstructured time in our day—all those things cultivate joy deep inside to help us through the dry stretches.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

● When you consider the activities you are involved with, what do you enjoy doing most? What saps your energy the most? What strategies work best for you when you are stressed out?