

# 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN ADVENT

## Gaudete (Rose) Sunday

“Strengthen the weak hands. Make firm the feeble knees.”

We hear these words from our first reading, from Isaiah, spoken to a people worn down by waiting, fear, and uncertainty—and yet spoken as a message of hope, not despair. These words are not a suggestion. They are God speaking directly into moments of pressure, exhaustion, and longing—assuring His people that He has not forgotten them. And Advent tells us something bold: those moments are not signs of God’s absence—they are often the places where His nearness begins to show itself.

Sometimes, we forget this easily. When life presses in, we assume something has gone wrong. When the waiting is long, we think we have been overlooked. When prayer feels heavy, we wonder if God has gone quiet. But Scripture teaches us otherwise. Transformation does not usually happen in comfort. It often begins quietly, under pressure, where God is already at work.

Grapes must be crushed, to become wine. Olives must be pressed, to release oil. Diamonds are formed under relentless pressure. Seeds do not grow in sunlight—they grow in darkness, hidden beneath the soil, unseen and silent. Nothing about these processes looks glorious while they are happening. Yet each one holds a promise: something richer, stronger, and more life-giving is coming. Without them, there is no fruit, no oil, no beauty, no life.

Even in our Gospel, there is a moment when John the Baptist—the fearless prophet, the voice crying out in the desert—finds himself confined and waiting, his certainty tested by darkness. From prison, he sends a question shaped not by rebellion but by faith under pressure: Is Jesus truly the One? And the response he receives is not a rebuke, but a sign of joy already unfolding—the blind see, the lame walk, the poor hear good news. The Kingdom is moving, even while the waiting feels heavy.

So, when God says, “Strengthen the weak hands,” He is not denying the weight we carry. He is saying, do not let go of faith, of hope, of love—because I am closer than you think. When He says, “Make firm the feeble knees,” He is not condemning our weakness. He is reminding us that weak knees are not the end—they are often where trust deepens.

There is a truth every Catholic learns eventually: When we can no longer stand on our own strength, we fall to our knees—not in defeat, but in prayer; not in fear, but in surrender to God.

Advent is a season of waiting, but it is not a season of idleness. It is the waiting of the soil that holds the seed. It is the waiting of the vine as pressure turns fruit into wine. It is the waiting of the olive as oil is drawn out, drop by drop. God is not idle in the dark. He is already preparing JOY!

Even the holiest people experience moments of doubt and heaviness. Even faithful hearts grow tired. But Advent—especially this joyful Sunday—assures us that God does not abandon us in those moments. He draws near. He works quietly. He brings life where we least expect it.

And often, the very pressure we wish would end ... is the place where grace is already being given. So, if you feel pressed right now, weighed down by waiting—know this: ... you are not failing. You are being formed. If you feel hidden in darkness, unseen and unheard—remember the seed. Life is already stirring.

Strengthen your weak hands not by pretending to be strong, but by placing them back into God’s hands. Make firm your feeble knees not by forcing yourself to stand taller, but by kneeling in trust. Prayer in weakness is not a last resort—it is a joyful act of faith.

Advent promises us this: God is near. He is near in the pressure. He is near in the darkness. He is near in the waiting. And when He draws near, signs of His Kingdom begin to appear—hope rises, healing unfolds, and new life breaks through where we least expect it.

So do not lose heart. Do not let go too soon. Do not assume that waiting means nothing is happening. Rejoice. The Lord is near. God is already at work within you. And what He is forming in you... ... will change everything.