

# Third Sunday of Advent

*Rejoice with joy and singing.*—Isaiah 35:2 NRSV

## Explore

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### Joy

Make or purchase baby-shower invitations and give them to the youth as they come to class. Serve punch and cake like what might be served at a baby shower.

baby-shower invitations, punch, cake, plates, cups, birth announcements, photo, *Hymns of the Saints*

When all are served, have class members brainstorm ways that the joy of Jesus' birth might be expressed if he were born in our town this Advent season (birth announcements, Web photos, sharing the news with family and friends, gifts, balloons, and yard signs). Some of these items might be on display to stimulate discussion.

Compare and contrast these activities with the events surrounding Jesus' actual birth. What joy was expressed then and by whom? What preparations had been made for his arrival? Following this discussion, have the class sing together hymn 241, "Sing Songs of Joy," and sing or read the words of hymn 243, "Good News! Great Joy to All the Earth." Both are found in *Hymns of the Saints*. Use the talents of the class by asking musicians to help with these songs.

Luke 2:19  
Luke 2:33–35  
Luke 2:41–51  
John 1:6–8, 19–28  
(John 1:6–8, 20–28 IV)  
Doctrine and Covenants 156:11 a–b

Ask class members to consider whether Mary and Joseph were able to sustain the joy of Jesus' birth throughout his growing-up years (Luke 2:19, Luke 2:33–35, Luke 2:41–51). Mention that it is believed that Mary was widowed and much of the nurturing of Jesus was done without Joseph's help. Also point out that the scriptures give very little detail about those years. Ask if they feel that his earthly parents really understood this "joy to the world" Jesus.

## Extract

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### Joy in Transformation

In the scripture from John 1:6–8 NRSV it states

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light."

Bible—Inspired Version and others

Further, in verses 19 to 28 (20 to 28 IV), John describes to the Pharisees who he is and who the light is. Read the verses. What is John's purpose? What is the purpose of the one who is referred to as the light? What does "I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal" mean in verse 27 NRSV?

We can only imagine the joy felt by John as he bore witness of the light of Jesus Christ and baptized him in preparation for his years of ministry. Being immersed in joy seems especially significant as we consider the baptism of Jesus, because baptism by immersion is the practice of the Community of Christ. Ask class members to explain what the word immersion means to them and give illustrations of other kinds of immersion. To be immersed might be described as making a total commitment, giving total concentration or focus to something, or totally putting yourself into something. Discuss if the class thinks it is possible to sustain such joy in this life, or is it the basic nature of humankind to be unable to sustain joy? What habits might be cultivated to keep one immersed in joy?

**Experience**

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### Songs of Everlasting Joy

Look at, listen to, or sing a variety of Christmas hymns, carols, and songs from books or CDs. Some have the word joy in their titles. Some cannot be sung without smiling, but all point to the joy that Jesus brings to people who are tired, wounded, or sad. Why do you think these songs are most often sung at Christmas? Wouldn't they be appropriate at any time of the year? For what other occasions would they also be appropriate? Discuss. What would you be like as a person if you lived your life joyfully? What would the church be like if all members and friends showed a joyful spirit? Respond on the paper provided.

Christmas hymns, carols, and songs; CD player; paper, pens or pencils

### Boxes of Joy

Purchase small paper-mache boxes with lids from a craft store for each student. Supply a variety of colored tissue paper, craft glue thinned with water, and brushes. Have students tear tissue into small pieces and apply to the outside of the box and lid with brush and glue. When the box and lid are completely covered with tissue paper, apply a final, overall coat of the thinned glue. Let the boxes dry. (A hair dryer will assist in the drying.)

small paper-mache boxes with lids, colored tissue paper, craft glue, water, brushes, hair dryer, labels, strips of paper

Provide each student with a slip of paper to write the following scripture: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God" (Isaiah 61:10). During the year, encourage students to place in the box descriptions of good times they've experienced, praise they've received, and favorite scriptures that give them joy. When they feel the need for an extra lift during a trying time, reach into the box for a reminder of joy and dare to rejoice.

**Expand**

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### Rejoice with Christ in Your Life

Share the joy of having Christ in your life with others by increasing the amount you would normally give in your Mission Tithes offering envelope on a regular basis. If youth don't use offering envelopes or their Mission Tithes envelopes, encourage them to begin during this season of giving. Challenge them to create a plan that will enable them to increase their giving (giving up vending machine purchases, taking on extra errands or jobs, building a personal savings account for this purpose to be used for the next World Hunger Emphasis Day).

Close with prayer.