



Today we light the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the candles on the advent ring, the pink candle. We are often asked why or what is the one pink candle for. Today is one of the 2 Sundays in the year when Fr Rodney wears a pink robe, the other being Mothering Sunday. As in lent, Advent was once more thought of a penitential season and a time for fasting, hence the use of purple. The pink marks more or less the middle of the penitential period. Today is also Gaudete Sunday, the Latin translation for 'Rejoice'. With the brighter pink colour and 'rejoice' being part of this Sunday, 'Joy' has become one of the themes for this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent.

With all that has and is going on in the world and our lives at the moment, at a time when it seems so difficult to do any of things we have always taken for granted, it seems easier to find a sense of joy in the simplest and most unexpected circumstances.

Over the past months Messy Church had continued to 'meet' virtually on zoom. In an attempt to keep our December Messy Church as 'normal' as possible but, still with some uncertainty how effective it would be, last Saturday teatime we held an online Christingle, with everyone making their own individual Christingles. As we all lit our candles and turned our room lights off and a Christingle prayer was read, there was that same sense of magic and joy that our Christmas Eve Christingle brings every year.

Many of you were present 2 Sundays ago after the worship, when Matilda, bursting with pride, told us she was going to be Angel Gabrielle in the nativity play. We were all overjoyed when she confidently recited her words, “Mary you are going to have a baby”. The all important words that begin the events of what we now know as Christmas. Gods joyful news to Mary which takes us into the last Sunday in Advent and as we draw ever nearer to the joy of birth of Jesus.

#### Collect for the day

O LORD Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: Grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### A reading from the book of Isaiah

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup> to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup> They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.  
For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

<sup>9</sup> Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.  
<sup>10</sup> I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
<sup>11</sup> For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

### A Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.  
<sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them.”  
<sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.  
<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.  
<sup>5</sup> May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.  
<sup>6</sup> Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.

### A reading from the Gospel according to John

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.  
<sup>19</sup> This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and

Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup> He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup> And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup> He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup> Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup> They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" <sup>26</sup> John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup> the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." <sup>28</sup> This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

### Words from Fr Rodney

This Sunday we jump forward thirty years from the preparation from the birth of Jesus to the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist. It seems a strange thing to do, but the birth and ministry of John the Baptist is a significant part of our story. The prophets foretold that in preparation for the coming Messiah, God would send a 'herald' to proclaim and identify him, and in the Gospel reading today the writer clearly identifies John the Baptist as that 'herald'. Traditionally this Sunday is one of the four Sundays in the year for the ordination of priests and deacons, and that is because those who are ordained are reminded that their ministry will be to follow in the footsteps of John, and direct people to Jesus. But it doesn't just apply to clergy, it is for all of us who already follow and believe in Jesus to be 'John the Baptists' and to bring others to Jesus. Like the Gospel itself, it isn't just about something that happened long ago, it is about us, now, and about our calling as Christians to bring others to know and follow Him. As part of following Jesus, each one of us is called to follow in the footsteps of John the Baptist, and in every way open to us to bring others to know and follow Jesus. The Gospel is not just about what happened then.....it is about what we are called to do today!

### Intercessions - Let us pray

Lord of joy as we light the third candle on our advent wreath, we are reminded that this is the season when we prepare for the joyful birth of your son; a message of hope which is needed today in these difficult

times, as much as it was two thousand years ago. We continue to give thanks for the joy of being able to worship together remotely and for the fellowship we have been able to share with Christians from other faith communities within our own area and beyond. We also give thanks for the opportunity to open up our churches for worship once again, all be it under restrictions. We ask you to bless and guide Father Rodney, our Church Wardens and all the many people involved in helping to make all of this possible and we continue to pray for all those who are not so fortunate. Amen

Lord of peace we bring before you our world facing so many problems. We pray for healing for all those areas of the world facing violence and division and for all those facing the pandemic without the resources they need. We pray also for all those whose lives are blighted by poverty and fear and for all those who have left their homes searching for safety and security who now find themselves in refugee camps. We pray for their safety and ask you to bless the work of the aid agencies and all those who advocate for them. We also continue to pray for the leaders of the world, that the voices of peace, justice and tolerance speak louder than those of hatred, intolerance and self interest and ask for wisdom and guidance for our own government and the leaders of Europe as we face this time of uncertainty. Amen

Lord of love we bring before you our families, friends and neighbours and we thank you for the love, friendship and kindness, which we have received this week. We think particularly of those for whom this time is particularly difficult; those who are lonely, those who have lost someone dear, those who are separated from their loved ones and those who fear for their futures. We pray also for many families who are under pressure at this time financially and emotionally and pray that they receive the support they need. We also continue to give thanks for all our key workers and for those working in our local businesses and pray for their safety during this busy time. Amen

Lord of hope we pray for all those who suffer in body mind or spirit, especially all those who are suffering from the pandemic, those who care

for them and their loved ones as well as any we wish to pray for particularly today .... We also remember all those working in our health and social services under so much pressure at this time as well as the residents and staff of our care homes, We give thanks for their service and pray for their safety. This week we especially give thanks for the hope that the beginning of the Covid vaccinations has given us and pray for the safety of all those involved in delivering it. We also give thanks for the skills of the scientists who have worked so hard to make this possible and pray that the vaccine is allocated fairly, especially in those areas of the world that will struggle to deliver it without the resources they need. Amen

Finally Father, we remember today all those who have gone before us, those who have died recently, especially in the pandemic, those whose anniversaries are around this time and any we wish to pray for today... we thank you for their love, friendship and our memories of them and we pray for comfort and peace for their loved ones. Finally, remembering God's gift of eternal life we ask that they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen

***In a moment of silence bring your own prayers***

The Lords prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass  
against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.  
Amen.