

# SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

## DO YOU SEE THE STARS?

*O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,  
it is the night of our dear Savior's birth.*

The stars above Bethlehem have long entranced our hearts and imaginations. Notice the stars in the image. They sweep across the sky in grandeur, casting their glow over the whole scene. Do you see the depth with which the stars cast their glow? To varying degrees, their light touches everything. From the child Jesus to the sheep in the fields to the homeless in the streets — light is a central theme of our advent season. Especially for those of us in the Western hemisphere, where the days are short and the nights are long, Christ comes to us in the depth of the darkness. While the slumbering earth awaits the return of the sun, we also await the return of the Son, our Lord. The candles of our Advent wreaths, the lights on our trees bear witness to both our waiting and our hope.

On this third Sunday of Advent we light the rose-colored candle. The candle that signifies our joy at the coming light. We rejoice together that our wait is almost over and rejoice in the opportunity to wait. This year, our celebrations look different; many of us may feel overwhelmed by the dark sky cast by a year of illness and unrest. The second reading for today reminds us to “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks.” In times of darkness, while prayer might come easily in the forms of lament or despair, ceaseless joy and gratitude can be more difficult to muster. Thus, the value of the prophets.



In today's gospel, we are introduced to John the Baptist:

*“A man named John was sent from God.  
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,  
so that all might believe through him.  
He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.”*

John and Jesus lived in dark times. Religious factions fought among themselves. The government was corrupt and ruled by external forces. Perhaps not unlike how many have felt this year, the state of unrest constantly risked feeling all-consuming. Yet, in spite of it, John is courageous enough to testify to the coming light of Christ. He calls out the rulers of his day for their hypocrisy, names the darkness and opens the eyes of others to look for the light. Who calls us to open our eyes and look for the light today? How can we be more attentive to where light might be calling us to joy and gratitude amid darkness?

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