

# Second Sunday of Advent

## Rejoice, Even When Life Seems Difficult

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First Reading: Baruch 5: 1-9

Psalm: 126: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

Second Reading: Philippians 1: 4-6, 8-11

Gospel: Luke 3: 1-6



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*“When the Lord brought back the captives of Sion, we were like folks dreaming.  
Then our mouths were filled with laughter, and our tongues with rejoicing.”*

As a cantor and liturgy planner, I am always conscious of the connections to be found among the readings chosen for the service. Sometimes these are vague, and I feel as if I am trying to tease out a thread from a torn fabric, trying to find the connection without losing the pattern of the whole. I rarely have that experience with the Advent readings: they are straightforward, and contrasting at the same time. This week they encourage us to rejoice always, even when life seems difficult, because God is with us in every event, and he assures us of his help. This is particularly evident in the responsorial psalm.

Everyone experiences hard times and difficulty. The ability to endure such times is sometimes referred to as a *“hard grace.”* Perhaps you, like the characters who are portrayed, have had the experience of telling stories about the hard times and troubles you have endured, and you find that your audience is laughing, not at the story, but in the realization that for you the hard times now seem comical. An old story tells about some disciples asking the Master, *“After the hard times, will there be singing?”* *“Yes,”* he replied, *“there will be singing about the hard times.”*

The hills and valleys of scripture are synonymous with the ups and downs of our daily lives. None of us is spared this journey but we are not alone in our times of distress, and our history assures us that the present time will not be our final destination. We can laugh at the past and dream about the new things to come. *“Jerusalem,”* the prophet Baruch says, *“take off your robe of mourning, for God is leading you in joy.”*

For your reflection:

- Advent readings call us to remember the past as prelude to the future. Is there something in this particular set of readings that *“stirs in you a memory”* of past events which may influence the way we view the future?
- Can you recall a past time of great stress that now *“fills your mouth with laughter”* in the recounting and allows you to laugh about it today?
- Finally, choose a phrase which you can carry with you as a reminder of the time you spent in prayer today. It can be a line from the original text, of perhaps just the title of a song you could hum all through the day. (Perhaps Dan Schutte’s *Every Valley*, or the familiar Quaker song *How Can I keep from Singing*, or a more modern song like *Ain’t No Mountain High Enough*). And feel free to break into song at any time.