

3rd Week of Advent: Joy Liturgy

Invocation

Spirit of Joy, Eternal Dance of Divinity, we come to you in worship! "We shake with joy, we shake with grief," said Mary Oliver. "What a time they have, these two, housed as they are in the same body." So let us bring all that we have and all that we are into this sacred time of togetherness. Let us dance the dance of humanity, moving with the wide spectrum of thoughts, feelings, yearnings, and leadings we have today. Let us worship our God who says, you are welcome here just as you are. Come, let us worship in our fullness and wholeness! Amen.

Litany of the Advent Candle

One: God's Spirit is upon us because God has anointed us and sent us out to bring good news to the oppressed...

All: To the lost, the lonely, the isolated, the marginalized.

One: God has sent us to bind up the brokenhearted...

All: The hopeless, the indifferent, the unmoved by human suffering.

One: God has sent us to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners...

All: The survivors, the forsaken, those caught in the webs and generations of violence.

One: God has asked us to be the proclaimers of the Year of Favor and to comfort all who mourn...

All: All who hurt, all who grieve, all who have forgotten their beloved-ness.

One: At this wreath, we proclaim this year is now.

All: With these candles, we call into our awareness the presence of the Spirit. (Light candles.)

One: Let us carry the light for and with each other, as we honor the valleys we have taken to get here...

All: As we honor the hard-earned joy of today. Amen.

Prayer of Transformation and Grace

In her song of praise, Mary sings that her soul glorifies, magnifies, and honors God. Her very being and her being herself gives God praise. What an invitation, then, to be our truest selves, amen? What a gift of grace, to discover and live into who we really are. For we are God's beloved, made in the image and likeness of a creator who loves justice, mercy, and compassion—to be made in the image of the word-made flesh vulnerably among us. "If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it," says Mary Oliver. Even with all of our mistakes and failings, all of our accidents and ways in which we lose ourselves, God invites us into forgiveness. God invites back to joy, to love, to wholeness. May we learn with and through each other how not to hesitate when it comes our way. Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Upon receiving her cousin Mary into her house, Elizabeth's home and the women themselves are transformed by joy. Joy in awe of one another, joy in their reconnection with each other, joy at the babes in their wombs, and joy that comes from celebrating themselves as God's blessed beloveds. As we gather today in God's home, how might we find sanctuary in joy, through joy, with joy even just being around us? What might we be invited to offer today to this place of safe refuge where communion is commonplace? However each of us responds to this call, may our joint offerings be anointed with justice and joy, and be infused by the Spirit that works through the generations. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

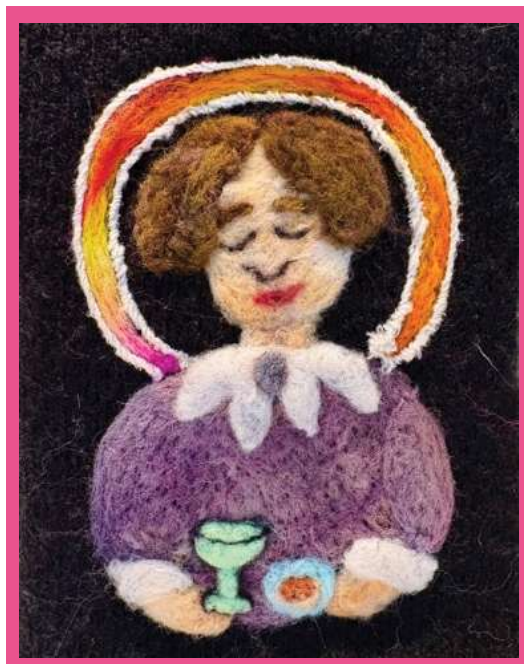
Homemaker Spirit, we lift up these offerings that they might sanctify this place. For it is in word, deed, and relationships that makes something holy and sacred. We trust in you to multiply our offerings' goodness and magnify the care they provide. Amen.



THE GREATEST OF THESE...

LOVE...

Children's Moment



In 1853, Antoinette Brown was the first woman ordained into the Christian ministry since biblical times. A passionate advocate for women's leadership in church and society, Antoinette did not aspire to be the first and only ordained woman—she wanted to be the first of many. Today there are thousands of women in ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

She was an inspiring public speaker who continued to stand up against injustice in spite of others who tried to bring her down. Reflecting on this, she wrote, "[B]ut above me and within me, there was a spirit stronger than them all." Antoinette lived to see the passage of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote, in 1920.

When you think about joy, do you ever think about feeling inspired into action? Or perhaps joining with others who care about the same issues or causes that you do? Sometimes joy can be experienced when we are doing something hard or challenging but know in our hearts that it is the right thing for us to do in that moment. Like Antoinette Brown, how might you share your joy for justice this Advent season? Or maybe, how might the Spirit be speaking to you through the causes you care deeply about?



THE GREATEST OF THESE...

LOVE...