

December 15 – Third Sunday of Advent

By Claudia Ward, CDP



I've always loved the season of Advent, especially when I was a first grade teacher. To have thirty something little ones eagerly anticipating each day was a special joy. When we would get to the third week, I would build up the fact that we were already "halfway to Christmas!" And then we would add a pink candle to our Advent wreath—somehow a happier color to remind us that, despite our need to wait, it was already time to rejoice.

While preparing this reflection, painful images of the victims of the deadly typhoon in the Philippines remain with me. These gracious people still plead for help and relief from their horrific suffering. In the midst of this, I received an e-mail from CARE, sharing a bit of their efforts to alleviate this dire situation. Accompanying their words was a striking picture of a beautiful young child proudly carrying a *pink* bag on her head. Her simple smile revealed the joy she had in carrying precious rice to her family to relieve some of their hunger. I had been wondering what the response of these suffering people might be, were they to hear the words of Isaiah today addressed to them. Perhaps they would sound too good to be true. They might find it hard to rejoice. In the light of such devastation, how would you receive these words of promise, words that paint such a beautiful and comforting picture of flowers blooming, the feeble made strong, the fearful filled with courage, the oppressed set free, the blind able to see, and the deaf now able to hear? Were our Savior not the reason for these words of promise, they would indeed be too good to be true. Even with this assurance, we still must heed the words of James to be patient and await the coming of the Lord. Our brothers and sisters in the Philippines, knowing all too well how to wait, revealed the depth of their faith, as they gathered for Sunday Masses in their churches that had been serving as centers of care and nourishment. Hopefully, in these gatherings, they also saw signs of God's reign among them as they heard the Good News in word and deed—and even a bit of joy. And when they heard Jesus' response to John, while they may not have seen lepers healed or the dead raised, they have, hopefully, seen some of their injured cared for, the hungry fed, the thirsty given water, and other needs met through the goodness and generosity of people making God's Providence visible to them in the most basic ways. If we can do the same for those around us in need, then we can truly rejoice, because the Lord continues to come among us.