

**Thought for the week**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent (C)  
16<sup>th</sup> December 2018

The first two readings and psalm of this weekend's Mass are full of joy and wishes for happiness and are so in tune with what most of us would like for Christmas. This is a time when we try to be generous, buying presents for others and planning extra special meals. For some, however, this can be a difficult time: missing loved ones, feeling lonely or excluded from society may be especially unbearable.

St Luke's Gospel is an encouragement to put our faith and service into practice: is there a better time of year to really focus on John's responses when different sections of the community turn to him and ask, "*What must we do?*" and embrace the maxim, *actions speak louder than words?*

The season of generosity is not just about what's under the tree; John tells those seeking the Messiah to share what they have; we can do the same and it can include our time and skills - grand gestures are not a requirement! Doing our share of the chores at home; offering a friendly ear to someone who needs to talk or going out of our way to lend someone a hand are presents that are never sniffed at.

My mother now lives on her own in my hometown in Scotland and is not as robust as she once was; she often tells me how good her neighbours are to her - from changing light bulbs to collecting a prescription, taking her shopping to mowing her front lawn. When I thank them on my visits, they always smile broadly tell me they are very happy to help, and I really believe them.

So, during this time of short days and busy schedules, let's try to remember to share what we have, even if it's in short supply: we can be generous with our time, a smile, and a warm welcome.

Mary