

WEEK THREE — JOY

“The Dancing Bell of Joy and the Bambinelli Blessing”



The third week of Advent arrived with a sunrise so pink and golden that it looked as though heaven itself was smiling. The Wise Pepper Farmer Giuseppe stepped outside and breathed in the cold morning air.

“Ah... **Gaudete!**” he chuckled. “The Sunday of Joy.”

Pip the Rabbit hopped through the snow, leaving little dotted trails behind him. “Giuseppe,” he said, “the sky looks happy today!”

“That is because,” Giuseppe said, “today we remember that **Jesus is very, very near.**”

Luma spiraled upward in a swirl of golden light.

“And it feels like the whole world is singing!”

Pastor the Black Dog barked joyfully — a bright, cheerful bark that sounded like bells — and wagged his tail so hard that the Story Wagon jingled.



Inside the wagon was this week's treasure, wrapped in linen. Giuseppe lifted it gently. "This," he said, "is the **Third Treasure of Advent: Joy.**" He unwrapped it to reveal a small, carved wooden bell.

As they made their way toward Little Flower Parish, the sound of children's laughter filled the air. Dozens of families were gathered outside, holding tiny Baby Jesus figurines — **Bambinelli** — wrapped in scarves, mittens, and care.

"It's *Bambinelli* Sunday!" Pip squeaked. "They brought the Baby Jesus from home!"

Giuseppe smiled. "Yes, Pip. Today we ask God to bless each *Bambinello*, so Jesus may bless every home."

The children gathered around *the Story Wagon*, holding out their Baby Jesus figures — clay ones, wooden ones, plastic ones, hand-sewn ones, and even one made from felt and buttons.

Giuseppe placed the wooden bell in the manger beside the olive-wood branch and the star.

Pip hopped forward: "**Joy is God's way of reminding us that He is close. Closer than we think.** Even small good things carry His happiness."

Luma glowed warmly above the children: "**Joy shines when we**



share the love of Jesus — even with a simple smile or a small kindness.”

Pastor curled beside the manger, tail sweeping the straw in excitement.

His bright eyes said it all: *Joy is meant to be shared.*

Giuseppe raised his hands and blessed the children and their Bambinelli: **“May these small figures of the Child Jesus bless your homes, your families, and your hearts. May they fill your Advent with joy, and your Christmas with the love of Christ.”**

The children brought their Bambinelli forward, one by one, placing them gently next to the wooden bell, which is next to the manger.

Some Bambinelli were chipped.

Some were new. Some were handed down from grandparents.

All were loved.

A little girl asked, “Giuseppe... why do we bless them?”

He knelt beside her. “Because joy grows when we welcome Jesus — even in the littlest ways. And every home that waits for Him with love will shine with His joy.”

Pastor barked again, and the children laughed.

As the Story Wagon rolled away, the sky glowed rose and gold.

The wooden bell shimmered.

The Bambinelli nestled in the manger.

And hearts — young and old — felt lighter than they had all week.

Joy had come.

And the Savior was very near.

The END.