

Sunday Readings

3rd December 2023

Collect

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly
kingdom. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your
Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 63:16-17, 64:1, 3-8

You, Lord, yourself are our Father,
'Our Redeemer' is your ancient name.
Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways
and harden our hearts against fearing you?
Return, for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your inheritance.

Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and
come down! – at your Presence the mountains
would melt.

No ear has heard,
no eye has seen
any god but you act like this
for those who trust him.

You guide those who act with integrity
and keep your ways in mind.
You were angry when we were sinners;
we had long been rebels against you.
We were all like men unclean,
all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing.
We have all withered like leaves
and our sins blew us away like the wind.
No one invoked your name
or roused himself to catch hold of you.
For you hid your face from us
and gave us up to the power of our sins.
And yet, Lord, you are our Father;
we the clay, you the potter,
we are all the work of your hand.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 79:2-3, 15-16, 18-19. R/. v.4

R/. *God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine
on us and we shall be saved.*

O shepherd of Israel, hear us,
shine forth from your cherubim throne.
O Lord, rouse up your might,
O Lord, come to our help. **R/.**

God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted. **R/.**

May your hand be on the man you have chosen,
the man you have given your strength.
And we shall never forsake you again;
give us life that we may call upon your name. **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St Paul
to the Corinthians

1:3-9

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send
you grace and peace.

I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have
received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you
have been enriched in so many ways, especially in
your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ
has indeed been strong among you so that you will
not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you
are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed;
and he will keep you steady and without blame until
the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because
God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus
Christ; and God is faithful.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Ps 84:8

Alleluia, alleluia!
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy
and give us your saving help.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 13:33-37

The Lord be with you.
And with your Spirit.
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Be on your guard, stay
awake, because you never know when the time will
come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone
from home, and left his servants in charge, each with
his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay
awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when
the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight,
cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must
not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all:
Stay awake!'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer after Communion

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

STAY
AWAKE

First Sunday of Advent

Lectionary Year B

The Word of God

Saint of the Week

Today the season of Advent begins, a journey of spiritual renewal in preparation for Christmas. We often speak of Advent as being a season of time in which we prepare for the Lord's coming into our lives. Perhaps we should see it as a season of heightened awareness, for the truth is that we should be looking for God already at work in our lives every day. God is always offering Himself to us. We, however, are not always responding because we're not paying attention. Advent is a time to conscientiously, deliberately, and with awareness respond to His offer of Himself to us.

Christ's coming into the world of man – into our world and our lives – must be more than an isolated memory or a momentary celebration. The worthy celebration of Christmas requires purification and growth in the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. These virtues provide the framework for Christian life and find their origin in the mystery of Christ, especially his Incarnation and birth.

Our Christian vocation flows from the mystery of the Incarnation, and Advent is the perfect season to explore its greatness and transcendence. It is the time, par excellence, to prepare our hearts for the unexpected gift of peace.

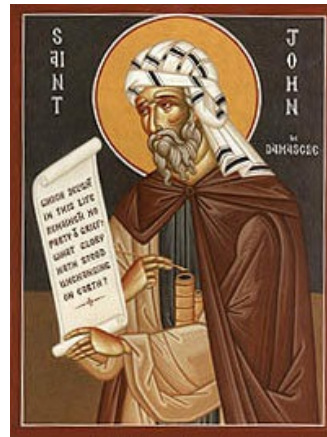


PRAYER of the Week

Advent God,
we journey with you,
to Bethlehem's stable
and a new-born King,
ears attuned
to the song of angels,
eyes alert
for Bethlehem's star.
Forgive us
if on our journey
we are distracted
by the tempting offers
of this world.
Keep our hearts aflame
with the hope
of Christmas,
and the promise
of a Saviour. Amen.

Monday 4 December 2023

**Saint John Damascene, priest,
Doctor of the Church**



St John was born of a Christian family in Damascus in the second half of the seventh century, where his father was a high official under the Umayyad caliph; a post which he inherited. When the Iconoclast movement (seeking to prohibit the veneration of icons) gained acceptance in the Byzantine court, John, being under Muslim rather than Byzantine rule, was able to write effective treatises

attacking Iconoclasm and attacking the emperor for supporting it. At about this time he retired to the monastery of Saint Sabas near Jerusalem, where he became a monk and was ordained. He died in the middle of the eighth century. His name was reviled and execrated by the imperial Iconoclast party even after his death.

His genius was not for original theological development, but for compilation of an encyclopedic character. In fact, the state of full development to which theological thought had been brought by the great Greek writers and councils left him little else than the work of an encyclopedist; and this work he performed in such manner as to merit the gratitude of all succeeding ages. Some consider him the precursor of the Scholastics, whilst others regard him as the first Scholastic, and his "De fide orthodoxa" (Concerning the Orthodox Faith) as the first work of Scholasticism. The Arabians too, owe not a little of the fame of their philosophy to his inspiration. The most important and best known of all his works is that to which the author himself gave the name of "Fountain of Wisdom". This work has always been held in the highest esteem in both the Catholic and Greek Churches. Its merit is not that of originality, for the author asserts, at the end of the second chapter of the "Dialectic", that it is not his purpose to set forth his own views, but rather to collate and epitomize in a single work the opinions of the great ecclesiastical writers who have gone before him. A special interest attaches to it for the reason that it is the first attempt at a *summa theologica* that has come down to us.

Sometimes known as "the last of the Church Fathers," he was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIII in 1883.