

Sunday Readings

7th December 2025

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 11:1-10

On that day: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;

and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples — of him shall the nations enquire, and his resting-place shall be glorious.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 71:1-2. 7-8. 12-13. 17. R/. cf. v.7

**R/. In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.**

O God, give your judgement to the king,
to a king's son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgement. **R/.**

In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to earth's bounds. **R/.**

For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who are helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of the poor. **R/.**

May his name be blessed for ever
and endure like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,
all nations bless his name. **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Romans 15:4-9

Brothers and sisters: Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.'

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

GOSPEL

Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight."'

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father", for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

'I baptise you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

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

Second Sunday of Advent

Lectionary Year A

The Word of God

Saint of the Week

Advent is a season full of joy. It is a joy which comes from a deep sense of expectation – and that has been the nature of Advent since it developed in the Church in the fifth century. Not so much a penitential period, more an excited time of spiritual preparation. It is a time when we look forward to the coming of Christ at Christmas, when we feel in our bones the certainty that we have a Redeemer, and that he is with us and knows our need. The keenness of our anticipation comes from the fact that we also look back to the past. The Christian Church has never forgotten what it was like not to know Christ. It has never forgotten how fervently the people of God longed for a Saviour. In this season we remember that longing, and share it.

As a result of this, we feel a profound sense of unity with our past - with all that gone before us in the Christian dispensation, and throughout Salvation History. As we look up at the immensity of Creation and see in it the glory of God, we also find that same glory in the story of young family who found no room at the inn, and in the birth of the Holy Child who would bring peace to his people.

For a moment, as we pray our way towards Christmas in this Advent season, we glimpse the eternal realities that lie beyond the chance and changes of our daily round, and we taste the peace and beauty that lies at the heart of all things.

Prayer of the Week

A Grace before meals for



ADVENT

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation,
in the darkness and in the light.
Blessed are you
in this food and in our sharing.
Blessed are you as we wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are
yours, now and for ever.

Amen.

Sunday 7 December 2025

St Ambrose of Milan

(340? - 397)

Ambrose was born in Trier (now in Germany) between 337 and 340, to a Roman family: his father was praetorian prefect of Gaul. Ambrose was educated at Rome and embarked on the standard *cursus honorum* of Roman advocates and administrators, at Sirmium, the capital of Illyria. In about 372 he was made prefect of Liguria and Emilia, whose capital was Milan.

In 374 the bishopric of Milan fell vacant and when Ambrose tried to pacify the conflict between the Catholics and Arians over the appointment of a new bishop, the people turned on him and demanded that he become the bishop himself. He was a layman and not yet baptized (at this time it was common for baptism to be delayed and for people to remain for years as catechumens), but that was no defence. Coerced by the people and by the emperor, he was baptized, ordained, and installed as bishop within a week, on 7 December 374.

He immediately gave his money to the poor and his land to the Church and set about learning theology. He had the advantage of knowing Greek, which few people did at that time, and so he was able to read the Eastern theologians and philosophers as well as those of the West.

He was assiduous in carrying out his office, acting with charity to all: a true shepherd and teacher of the faithful. He was unimpressed by status and when the Emperor Theodosius ordered the massacre of 7,000 people in Thessalonica, Ambrose forced him to do public penance. He defended the rights of the Church and attacked the Arian heresy with learning, firmness and gentleness. He also wrote a number of hymns which are still in use today.

Ambrose was a key figure in the conversion of St Augustine to Catholicism, impressing Augustine (hitherto unimpressed by the Catholics he had met) by his intelligence and scholarship. He died on Holy Saturday, 4 April 397.

