

# SUNDAY READINGS

## 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2023

### FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 40:1-5.9-11

'Console my people, console them'  
says your God.  
'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem  
and call to her  
that her time of service is ended,  
that her sin is atoned for,  
that she has received from the hand of the Lord  
double punishment for all her crimes.'

A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness  
a way for the Lord.  
Make a straight highway for our God  
across the desert.  
Let every valley be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be laid low.  
Let every cliff become a plain,  
and the ridges a valley;  
then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed  
and all mankind shall see it;  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

Go up on a high mountain,  
joyful messenger to Zion.  
Shout with a loud voice,  
joyful messenger to Jerusalem.  
Shout without fear,  
say to the towns of Judah,  
'Here is your God.'

Here is the Lord coming with power,  
his arm subduing all things to him.  
The prize of his victory is with him,  
his trophies all go before him.  
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,  
gathering lambs in his arms,  
holding them against his breast  
and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

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

### Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 84:9-14. R/. v.8

**R/. Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us  
your saving help.**

I will hear what the Lord God has to say,  
a voice that speaks of peace,  
peace for his people.  
His help is near for those who fear him  
and his glory will dwell in our land. **R/.**

Mercy and faithfulness have met;  
justice and peace have embraced.  
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth  
and justice look down from heaven. **R/.**

The Lord will make us prosper  
and our earth shall yield its fruit.  
Justice shall march before him  
and peace shall follow his steps. **R/.**

### SECOND READING

A reading from the second letter of St Peter 3:8-14

There is one thing, my friends, that you must never forget: that with the Lord, 'a day' can mean a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not being slow to carry out his promises, as anybody else might be called slow; but he is being patient with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to change his ways. The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky will vanish, the elements will catch fire and fall apart, the earth and all that it contains will be burnt up.

Since everything is coming to an end like this, you should be living holy and saintly lives while you wait and long for the Day of God to come, when the sky will dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the heat. What we are waiting for is what he promised: the new heavens and new earth, the place where righteousness will be at home. So then, my friends, while you are waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain so that he will find you at peace.

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

### Gospel Acclamation

Lk3:4,6

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight,  
and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.  
Alleluia!

### GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

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

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;  
he will prepare your way.  
A voice cries in the wilderness:  
Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

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

# Second Sunday of Advent

Lectionary Year B

The Word of God

Saint of the Week

Thursday 14 December 2023

**St John of the Cross (1542 - 1591)**

Born in Spain in 1542, John learned the importance of self-sacrificing love from his parents. His father gave up wealth, status, and comfort when he married a weaver's daughter and was disowned by his noble family. After his father died, his mother kept the destitute family together as they wandered homeless in search of work. These were the examples of sacrifice that John followed with his own great love - God.



When the family finally found work, John still went hungry in the middle of the wealthiest city in Spain. At fourteen, John took a job caring for hospital patients who suffered from incurable diseases and madness. It was out of this poverty and suffering that John learned to search for beauty and happiness not in the world, but in God.

After John joined the Carmelite order, Saint Teresa of Avila asked him to help her reform the movement. John supported her belief that the order should return to its life of prayer. But many Carmelites felt threatened by this reform, and some members of John's own order kidnapped him. He was locked in a cell six feet by ten feet and beaten by the monks. There was only one tiny window high up near the ceiling. Yet in that unbearable dark, cold, and desolation, his love and faith were like fire and light. He had nothing left but God - and God brought John his greatest joys in that tiny cell.

After nine months, John escaped. He hid from his pursuers in a convent infirmary where he read his poetry to the nuns. From then on his life was devoted to sharing and explaining his experience of God's love.

He died at the monastery of Ubeda in Andalusia on 14 December 1591: the monks there, who had treated him so badly, eventually recognised his sanctity and his funeral was the occasion of a great outburst of enthusiasm.

His works include two major mystical poems - he is considered one of the great poets of the Spanish language - and detailed commentaries on them and the spiritual truths they convey. He was canonized in 1726 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1926.

*"In the twilight of life, God will not judge us on our earthly possessions and human successes, but on how well we have loved."*

*"Where there is no love, put love -- and you will find love."*

**A**dvent 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.