



## UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

USCCB » Bible » Daily Readings

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### DECEMBER 10, 2017

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**Second Sunday of Advent**  
**Lectionary: 5**

#### Reading 1

IS 40:1-5, 9-11

Comfort, give comfort to my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her  
that her service is at an end,  
her guilt is expiated;  
indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:  
In the desert prepare the way of the LORD!  
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!  
Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill shall be made low;  
the rugged land shall be made a plain,  
the rough country, a broad valley.  
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together;  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Go up on to a high mountain,  
Zion, herald of glad tidings;  
cry out at the top of your voice,  
Jerusalem, herald of good news!  
Fear not to cry out  
and say to the cities of Judah:  
Here is your God!  
Here comes with power  
the Lord GOD,  
who rules by his strong arm;  
here is his reward with him,  
his recompense before him.

Like a shepherd he feeds his flock;  
 in his arms he gathers the lambs,  
 carrying them in his bosom,  
 and leading the ewes with care.

### Responsorial Psalm

PS 85:9-10-11-12, 13-14

R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims;  
 the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people.  
 Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,  
 glory dwelling in our land.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Kindness and truth shall meet;  
 justice and peace shall kiss.  
 Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
 and justice shall look down from heaven.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

The LORD himself will give his benefits;  
 our land shall yield its increase.  
 Justice shall walk before him,  
 and prepare the way of his steps.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

### Reading 2

2 PT 3:8-14

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved,  
 that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years  
 and a thousand years like one day.  
 The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay,"  
 but he is patient with you,  
 not wishing that any should perish  
 but that all should come to repentance.  
 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,  
 and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar  
 and the elements will be dissolved by fire,  
 and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.

Since everything is to be dissolved in this way,  
 what sort of persons ought you to be,  
 conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion,  
 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,  
 because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames  
 and the elements melted by fire.  
 But according to his promise  
 we await new heavens and a new earth  
 in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, since you await these things,  
be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

### Alleluia

LK 3:4, 6

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:  
All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

MK 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;  
he will prepare your way.*

*A voice of one crying out in the desert:*

*"Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight his paths."*

John the Baptist appeared in the desert  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

People of the whole Judean countryside

and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem

were going out to him

and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River

as they acknowledged their sins.

John was clothed in camel's hair,  
with a leather belt around his waist.

He fed on locusts and wild honey.

And this is what he proclaimed:

"One mightier than I is coming after me.

I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.

I have baptized you with water;

he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 4, 2016 A

**Opening prayer:** *Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Sharing life:** What are you most and least grateful for this week?

**Facilitator reads focus statement:** There is a shift in focus from the Second Coming of the Lord to his historical birth as the season unfolds. Today's first reading blends the two, but reflects a growing emphasis on the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah's disillusionment with the kings of his own time leads him to dream about an ideal king who will rule the people with the mind and heart of God. In the Gospel, John the Baptist is preparing the people for the coming of the ideal or messianic King. In the second reading, Paul tells his readers that Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise to the Israelites.

Read the assigned Scripture readings, pausing briefly after each one. Consider going over the commentary after each reading, if you have not done so prior to your meeting.

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 11:1-10

Disillusioned with King Ahaz, a contemporary of Isaiah, the prophet assures his people that God will raise up a faithful King who will rule his people with the mind and heart of God. This new King will come from the "stump of Jesse" (David's father). "Stump" implies that the house of Jesse and his descendants have been cut down and the monarchy has been defeated. But appearances are deceptive, for out of this seemingly defeated stump will sprout a shoot—a new plant upon which the spirit of the Lord will rest. Even though Isaiah most likely has in mind the yet-to-be born King Hezekiah who will reign close to his time, Christians see Christ as the ideal King spoken of by Isaiah.

There are several divine gifts that will be bestowed on the future King to enable him to rule in a way that is pleasing to God. (We learn about these "Isaian gifts" of the Spirit when preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation.)

Isaiah dreams or imagines a time when a wonderful peace will reign in the land of Israel. Enemies will live in harmony with each other. The King springing from the stump of Jesse will be so divinely inspired that even the Gentiles will seek him out.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM 72

In this royal psalm, the psalmist asks God to bless the King, especially with justice, so that he in turn can

bless his people and help them to experience justice and peace in their lives.

### SECOND READING: Romans 15:4-9

Paul is writing to a community comprising both Jewish and Gentile Christians, with very dedicated followers of Christ and some not so dedicated. Paul strongly exhorts all members of the Roman Christian community to be patient with each other and to live together in "perfect harmony," accepting each other as Christ accepts them. Their unity and mutual respect glorify God.

### GOSPEL: Matthew 3:1-12

Each year on the second Sunday of Advent, we meet John the Baptist out in the desert where he is preparing large crowds for the coming of Jesus. His message is a call to repentance. The "repentance" John calls for does not concern attention to the externals of one's religion, but rather a total change of mind and heart which would manifest itself in "good fruits" like prayerfulness and justice in one's relationships with others. Such a change of heart and behavior would prepare people to welcome the Messiah and his message.

John shows little patience for the insincere Pharisees who step forward for his baptism. In his eyes, they do not manifest the "true fruits of repentance." They are just going through the motions of conversion, perhaps to look good in the eyes of people who are so drawn to John's message.

It would seem that when Matthew was writing his Gospel to a largely Jewish audience about 50 years after Jesus' death, there may have been some competition between the followers of John and the followers of Jesus. Matthew wants to make it very clear that true disciples of John should also be disciples of Jesus, since John himself was a disciple of Jesus and regarded his ministry as inferior to that of Jesus.

Finally, references to 'winnowing fan,' 'fire,' and 'ax' speak of a coming judgment when the truly converted will be separated from the unconverted. We too are called to repent as a way of preparing our hearts for the coming of the Lord.

### **FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS**

1. What verse or image spoke to you most? Why?
2. In the first and second readings, Isaiah and Paul dreamed of a world in which all people could live in harmony with one another. What are some of the common things that often keep you from living in harmony with others? What helps you to overcome these obstacles to peace?
3. What would arouse John the Baptist's wrath today? How do you think John would be received by *us* today?
4. What are signs or fruits of a life converted to Christ?

### **RESPONDING TO THE WORD**

Name one way you can act on this Sunday's readings. Suggestions: Spend some serious time asking the Holy Spirit to help you to see what attitudes or behaviors need changing in your life. If there is some relationship in your life that needs to be restored to peace, pray about what steps you can take to make this happen.

### **CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

Pray for the grace of true repentance. Pray for the grace to make a good confession this Advent season.

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