ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.
Indeed, the Lord is near.

COLLECT

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,
enable us, we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING — Zephaniah 3:14-18

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah.

Shout for joy, daughter of Zion,
Israel, shout aloud!
Rejoice, exult with all your heart,
daughter of Jerusalem!
The Lord has repealed your sentence;
he has driven your enemies away.
The Lord, the king of Israel, is in your midst;
you have no more evil to fear.
When that day comes, word will come to Jerusalem:
Zion, have no fear,
do not let your hands fall limp.
The Lord your God is in your midst,
a victorious warrior.
He will exult with joy over you,
he will renew you by his love;
he will dance with shouts of joy for you
as on a day of festival.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM — Isaiah 12:2-6

Response:
Sing and shout for joy
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

1. Truly, God is my salvation,
I trust, I shall not fear.
For the Lord is my strength, my song,
he became my saviour.
With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation. **(R.)**

2. Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his name!
Make his mighty deeds known to the peoples!
Declare the greatness of his name. **(R.)**

3. Sing a psalm to the Lord
for he has done glorious deeds,
make them known to all the earth!
People of Zion, sing and shout for joy
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. **(R.)**

SECOND READING — Philippians 4:4-7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians.

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL — Luke 3:10-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

When all the people asked John, "What must we do?" he answered, "If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same." There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, "Master, what must we do?" He said to them, "Exact no more than your rate." Some soldiers asked him in their turn, "What about us? What must we do?" He said to them, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!"

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, "I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals: he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out." As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

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

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord,
we pray,
be offered to you unceasingly,
to complete what was begun in sacred mystery
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear.
Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord,
that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults
and prepare us for the coming feasts.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The liturgical season of Advent has a twofold character. We think of it first of all as a time to prepare for Christmas, when Christ's first coming among us in human form will be remembered. Second, it is the season that prepares our minds and hearts for Christ's second coming at the end of time. The main note of our Advent liturgy is therefore devout and joyful expectation.

redemptorist publications

Concordat cum originali: + Eamon Martin Archbishop of Armagh. Commentary by Fr Anthony Cassidy CSsR. The English translation of the entrance and communion antiphons, the opening prayers, prayers over the gifts, gloria, creed, and prayers after communion from The Roman Missal, © 2010 International Commission of English in the Liturgy Corporation. Jerusalem Bible version of the scriptures copyright: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., and Doubleday & Co. Inc. Responsorial psalms are copyright The Grail and/or Geoffrey Chapman Ltd. Published in Ireland by Redemptorist Communications (www.redcoms.org); Published in the UK by Redemptorist Publications (www.rpbooks.co.uk)

12 DECEMBER 2021
Sunday Message
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year C • Psalter Week 3

In our Gospel extract today, we are given examples of the preaching of John the Baptist. He was someone who attracted a great following, including civic officials and members of the armed forces.

Luke presents John as a person of great importance, with an urgent message: however, he is not the main character in the Gospel story. Throughout the Infancy Narrative, the evangelist showed him as occupying a lesser place to that of Jesus, and in our reading today, John explicitly rejects any suggestion that he himself might be the Messiah. He compares the baptism he offers with that of Jesus: John's comes through water; that of Jesus comes through the Holy Spirit and fire, which will be fulfilled, in Luke's writings, at Pentecost. Furthermore, John describes himself as an unworthy servant of the one to come, unfit to untie the laces of his sandals. ■

REFLECT

The execution of John the Baptist is recounted by Mark, in graphic and well-known detail, as the result of his denouncing Herod Antipas for marrying Herod's sister-in-law. But the first part of our reading today suggests another, probably more historically accurate reason. Among those who responded positively to John's preaching were tax collectors and soldiers. These were the officials on whom the smooth running of the state depended. If the Baptist were seen as having influence on such people, then he could be perceived as an alternative centre of power and so a threat to the central government. This would be a more plausible reason for John's being imprisoned and executed than his criticising the domestic arrangements of the local ruler, who could easily ignore his comments.

John the Baptist is an uncomfortable figure, very much in the mould of the Old Testament prophets. There are not often statues of the Baptist to be found on sale in repositories. The prophets were suspicious and critical of institutional religion because, to them, it lulled people into a false sense of security: if someone fulfilled their religious duties, then they could consider themself as being at rights with God, but the prophets taught that deeper values were – and are – at stake. So when John the Baptist called for repentance, he was in the line of the Hebrew and Israelite prophets and this is the message of Jesus, when he embarks on his ministry.

Who are the prophets today? It is tempting to think that the Holy Spirit works through the channels of the official Church, but this is not the message of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. John the Baptist was not a member of the official clergy, nor was Jesus, and their comments on the Temple and other religious authorities of their day make uncomfortable reading if we apply them to the present day. But "the word of the Lord stands for ever": there is a saying that the Church is always in need of reform. In Advent, during which John the Baptist is so prominent, we might reflect on that and listen to the other voices. ■

DO

Put out the crib figure of Joseph from your crib set: reflect on the response of Joseph as a young man to the call of the Lord.

SAY

Sing and shout for joy, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.
(Isaiah 12:6)

LEARN

John the Baptist attracted followers from tax collectors and soldiers.

These were important figures for the efficient functioning of the state.

Therefore, the Baptist could be perceived as a threat to the central government and this may have been the reason for his arrest and subsequent execution.

Stained glass in the Church of Saint-Séverin, Paris, depicting the beheading of John the Baptist