

First reading Isaiah 11:1-10**‘With righteousness he shall judge the poor.’**

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.

Responsorial Psalm 72(71):1-2,7-8,12-13, 17 R cf.7**In his days shall justice flourish, and great peace for ever.**

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.

In his days justice shall flourish,
and great peace till the moon is no more.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the River to the bounds of the earth.

For he shall rescue the needy when they cry,
the poor who have no one to help.
He will have pity on the weak and the needy,
and save the lives of the needy.

May his name endure for ever,
his name continue like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blest in him,
all nations shall call him blessed.

Second reading Romans 15:4-9**Christ saves humanity.**

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.’

Gospel Acclamation Luke 3: 4, 6**Alleluia, alleluia.**

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

Alleluia.**Gospel Matthew 3:1-12****‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’**

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.’ Copyright: The readings are from the Jerusalem Bible published by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd 2019

Feast Days this week

Monday 8th December: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Tuesday 9th December: St Juan Diego Cauauhtlatotzin

Wednesday 10th December: Our Lady of Loreto, St John Roberts (Wales)

Thursday 11th December: St Damasus I

Friday 12th December: Our Lady of Guadalupe, St Finian (Ireland)

Saturday 13th December: St Lucy

The Cycle of Prayer**Migrants and Refugees**

especially on 3 December, Feast of St Francis Xavier

Background

On December 3rd the Church commemorates St Francis Xavier. This is the day chosen by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People to mark World Migration Day. Each year there is a message from the Holy Father reflecting on the 'signs of the times'.

Asylum seekers and refugees — I wish to underline how the tendency is to stop at the question of their arrival while disregarding the reasons for which they left their native land. [Benedict XVI - Message for World Migration day 2005]

Prayer

*Lord, no one is a stranger to you
and no one is ever
far from your loving care.
In your kindness watch over
refugees and exiles,
those separated from their loved ones,
young people who are lost,
and those who have left
or run away from home.
Bring them back safely
to the place where they long to be
and help us always
to show your kindness
to strangers and those in need.*

Roman Missal: For Refugees and Exiles

Preparing the way of the Lord

John the Baptist could be the central figure in our thoughts today. He prepared the way for the people of his time to understand the good news of their salvation. That is the way God normally works; He sends the message of salvation to us through each other. As St Paul once put it, how can people know the truth about God if they have never heard it; and how can they hear if nobody is sent to them?

Jesus found his first disciples among those who were influenced by the preaching of John the Baptist. He had showed them the value of self-control and of prayer; he urged them to listen to the inner voice of God, with repentance and a faithful heart. The high point of John's short ministry was his meeting with Jesus. Not only did he get to baptise Our Lord but he also helped some of his own followers to go with Jesus and become the first Christian disciples. Through him, Andrew and his brother Peter, and Philip and Nathanael became apostles of Jesus.

Clearly, God wishes us Christians also to help help other people to know and love him. If in the first place, we were more committed to our own Christian calling, we would be more effective in influencing others towards religious commitment. Parents have the first opportunity to point their children towards God. But their words will only be effective when backed up by the actual example of their own faith and prayer.

People can influence others, for good or ill, in all sorts of ways. A special kind of influence rests with the journalists and opinion-formers who work in the media, press, radio and television and through the internet. But ordinary people outside the media can also influence the views and values of those with whom they talk and live. When looked at in light of today's Gospel, does our way of speaking and behaving in any way help others to share our values, or do we confirm their suspicion that this world is a selfish and cynical place?

And what about fostering vocations to some active form of church service? The ability of our Church to go on as a visible, organised community continuing in the prayer-life and values of Jesus is under serious question today. If people open their hearts to inspiration, Andrew and Philip and Peter, a way will be found to spread the saving message of Christ.

associationofcatholicpriests.ie