

First reading Isaiah 49:3,5-6

'I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'

The Lord said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.'

And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him - for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength- he says:

'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel;

I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'

Responsorial Psalm 40(39):2, 4, 7-10 R8a,9a

Behold, I have come, Lord, to do your will.

I waited, I waited for the Lord,
and he stooped down to me;
he heard my cry.

He put a new song into my mouth,
praise of our God.

You delight not in sacrifice and offering,
but in an open ear.

You do not ask for holocaust and sin offering.
Then I said, 'Behold, I have come.'

In the scroll of the book it stands written of me:

'I delight to do your will, O my God;
your instruction lies deep within me.'

Your uprightness I have proclaimed
in the great assembly.

My lips I have not sealed;
you know it, O Lord.

Second reading 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Paul, called by the will of God to be an Apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,
To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Acclamation John 1: 14a,12a

Alleluia, alleluia.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us;
to all who did receive him,
he gave the authority to become children of God.

Alleluia.

Gospel John 1:29-34

'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'

At that time: John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me." I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptising with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John bore witness: 'I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptise with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit." And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.'

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Feast Days this week

Monday 19th January: St Wulstan

Tuesday 20th January: St Fabian, St Sebastian

Wednesday 21st January: St Agnes

Thursday 22nd January: St Vincent

Saturday 24th January: St Francis de Sales

The Cycle of Prayer

Openness to the Word of God

Prayer

All-wise God,
as you have granted us
to drink with delight
from the Word
that leads us to know you,
in your goodness grant us also
to come at length to you,
source of all wisdom,
and stand for ever before your face.

based on a prayer of the Venerable Bede

Taking stock of ourselves

Two particular thoughts are prompted by today's readings. The first is John's dramatic declaration, Behold the Lamb of God. the second is an invitation to do a personal stock-taking during this first month of the new year, and make some resolutions to improve the quality of our lives. The Baptist urges us to ask what are we fundamentally about and then seek to reset our lives. And St Paul reminds us that we are "called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

An honest stock-taking of ourselves may unveil the selfish motives that often direct our actions. To rise above an ego-centric spirit we need to recognise something outside of and larger than ourselves, the God who cares for us and for the whole human community. Can we listen to John's call to restore what is broken, and Jesus' call, to bring light to the world? Do we see that it is with our cooperation that the Lamb can remove the "sin of the world?"

Facing our deepest personal truths is always difficult; it calls us to not just drift along with this world's evil, always taking the line of least resistance. Discipleship is urgent and costly, but it is also possible and is the way towards the deeper joy and fulfilment that our soul is longing for. If we properly hear the Baptist as he witnesses to Christ, our response will be a stock-taking that goes to the root of our being. It may even reveal to us the truth that sets us free.associationofcatholicpriests.ie