

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

**John 1: 6-8, 19-28**

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, "I am not the Christ." "Well then," they asked "are you Elijah?" "I am not" he said. "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?" So John said, "I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord."

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, "Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?" John replied, "I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal strap."

This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

John the Baptist says, 'there stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.' Jesus Christ stands among us, but he remains unknown to many. Perhaps we could do more to make him known, to let his light shine in our world through our example? The Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness, a voice to invite people into relationship with God. We too are asked to use our voice to make Christ known. We can use our gift of communication to spread faith in Christ and illustrate his values and his attitudes. In our behaviour too, we can let the Lord communicate through us. If we realise our calling to be witnesses to the light, it can shape how we live and explain why we live the way we do. Advent is a good time to reclaim our fundamental identity, our Christ-linked identity. If Jesus is to be born anywhere today, it will be in the hearts of his followers and in those whose hearts are open to receive him.

# Third Sunday of Advent Year B

**13<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

*Gaudete Sunday*



Today's readings shine out with joy and hope. Israel radiates as a joyful bride coming to her bridegroom adorned for a lavish, oriental wedding. Paul's words to the Thessalonians continue the theme of hope and joy in a community that lives by the life of Christ. And St John, in the gospel, pictures the work of John the Baptist, who came to witness to God's light upon this earth. This is not a joyousness without responsibility. It's a joy that is found when people find and carry out their true mission in life. Isaiah speaks of one anointed and sent to bring good news to the oppressed – words that were adopted by Jesus to describe his own life's purpose – just as they should also be made real in the life of every Christian. Those privileged to share in Jesus' spiritual life must also share in his concerns and desires.

**Opening Prayer**

*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.*

### **Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11**

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. "I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity, like a bridegroom wearing his wreath, like a bride adorned in her jewels. For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will the Lord make both integrity and praise spring up in the sight of the nations.

Isaiah bursts out in Joy as he experienced the divine presence and hand of God tremendously at work in his life and mission: "*The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me to...*" This is a song of joy and satisfaction of an empowered person. He recounts what God has done in his life.

This too should be our song today because, we have been filled with the Spirit of God. We are filled in order to be strengthened for the last phase of our journey this Advent. So, in appreciation for this, we shout for joy to the Lord. This is the great joy that Gaudete Sunday provokes. That is, the joy that our Saviour is near

### **Psalm ~ Luke 1: 46-50. 53-54**

*My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour. He looks on his servant in her nothingness; henceforth all ages will call me blessed.*

*The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy his name!*

*His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear him.*

*He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty.*

*He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy.*



### **1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24**

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus. Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil. May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

Paul's requirement for constant prayer can be a challenge. Maybe we have no problem with praying, but to pray without ceasing?

We can however live every moment in the confidence that we are loved by God. We can look to God for guidance when we need to make a decision. If we have eyes to see, we can find a thousand things for which to give thanks. Even a cursory reading of a newspaper will tell us of situations around the world that need God's intervention. There are any number of people deserving of our supplications—our family and friends, the Church and its' members, church leaders, governmental leaders, front-line workers, the person standing before us at the supermarket till, and so on. Let us pray especially that the God of peace makes us perfect and holy ready to receive the Lord Jesus when next he comes.

*(Gospel & reflection overleaf)*

### **Prayer over the Offerings**

*May this 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.*

### **Prayer after Communion**

*We implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine food may cleanse us of our faults and prepare us for the coming feasts.*