

13 DECEMBER 2020

Sunday Message

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 3



Statue of St John the Baptist on the north side of Charles Bridge, one of the most famous tourist spots in Prague

John the Baptist is, in some ways, a transitional figure: he straddles what we usually call the Old and New Testaments, by which we mean the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

He looks backward to the prophets of the Jewish tradition, especially to Elijah, the figure who represents the prophetic tradition. On the other hand, he looks forward to the coming of the Christ and functions as his herald, announcing the near arrival of the kingdom of God.

In today's Gospel episode, we hear how John was a puzzle to those who shared his Jewish faith: was he, in fact, the Messiah? There seem to have been more than a few people who thought that he might well be. The leaders of the people send representatives to ask John to clarify his position, and he states firmly that he is not the Christ, whose sandal-strap he is not worthy to undo.

The New Testament writers clearly had a difficulty with the figure of John the Baptist and his relationship to Jesus. John was obviously a significant person at the time and so has a place in the Gospel tradition. The reading from the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, the first paragraph of our extract today, presents him as being sent by God – as a witness. No matter how important John was in his own right, his place in the tradition is as a subordinate to Jesus, and once Jesus appears, John's role comes to an end. We might remember that the most important person in the Gospel tradition is Jesus: all other characters, no matter how significant, are always presented in relation to Jesus and never in isolation, separated from him. ■

LEARN

In the Fourth Gospel, the term "the Jews" normally refers to the Jewish leaders who are hostile to Jesus.

In the Gospel according to John, "to believe" is to make a positive decision for Jesus and his teaching.

Priests and Levites are figures principally associated with the Temple in Jerusalem.

REFLECT

Someone once remarked that there is no occurrence of the word "faith" in the Gospel according to John. This statement is, strictly speaking, true. The noun "faith" is not found, but the verb "to believe" occurs well over 100 times. Faith, in this sense, is not something that we possess but rather something we do. The Creed which we declare together at the Eucharist is a statement of doctrine, but faith is essentially a relationship with God. The evangelist John tells us throughout his Gospel version that to believe is to make a choice: it is not a matter of logic, but rather a personal decision to accept Jesus and his teaching.

As we approach the celebration of the birth of Christ, we might reflect on this aspect of our Christian life. Sometimes cradle Catholics say that they envy people who come to the faith later in life, because they have had to make a conscious, adult decision for themselves in a way that others, born into Catholic families and raised in a Christian environment, never had to. At Christmas, we celebrate the coming of the light into the world. It is our choice whether we live in the light or not. We might make this Christmas an opportunity to renew that resolution once more. ■

SAY

Rejoice in the Lord always!
(Philippians 4:4)

DO

Look at the state of the roads around your town: how does their condition reflect your readiness to welcome Jesus at Christmas?



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,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
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 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."
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Luke 1

Response:

My soul rejoices in my God.

1. 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.
(R.)
2. The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him. (R.)
3. He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Thessalonians.
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.

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

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

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.

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 has 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 pilgrims continue to come. Only God
knows what each one of us brings, and with
what kind of heart. We come mystically to
this cave. We know the mess we bring and
the often distracted heart that brings it. But
this is all we have – all we are. One stretches
out his arms to receive.

Basil M Pennington OCSO

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MASSSES and INTENTIONS: December 2020	
Sat 12th	10-11am Confessions 2nd Week of Advent <i>Holy Souls</i>
Sat 12th	6.00pm 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (VIGIL) (GAUDETE SUNDAY) <i>Maria Meschi (Year's Mind)</i>
Sun 13th	8.00am 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT <i>The Parish</i>
Sun 13th	10.00am 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT <i>Socratic Biscotti RIP 2nd Annv.</i>
Sun 13th	12 noon BAPTISM: Grace Smith <i>Francesca Burton RIP</i>
Mon 14th	(Private Mass) St. John of the Cross <i>Belmont</i>
Tue 15th	(Private Mass) 3rd Week of Advent <i>Community Our Volunteer Stewards</i>
Wed 16th	10.15am 3rd Week of Advent <i>Gair Greene RIP</i>
Thu 17th	(Private Mass) 3rd Week of Advent <i>Special Intention</i>
Fri 18th	9.30am SFX School - Year 6 <i>Holy Souls</i>
Sat 19th	10-11am Confessions 3rd Week of Advent <i>The Parish</i>
Sat 19th	6.00pm 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (VIGIL) <i>MacGregor/ Gleason RIP</i>
Sun 20th	8.00am 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT <i>Tom Lofus RIP (100th Birthday)</i>
Sun 20th	10.00am 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Remembrance: Leslie Prosser	
Mary Mailey	Christopher Edward Ford Rozalia Masur
Lately Dead	Cynthia Barnett John Birch
Peter Nelson	
Please Pray For The Sick	
Pat England	Joan Sheeran Pat Morris
Velina Wilson	Mary Elizabeth Nicola Merrick
Lynne Howells	Martin O'Sullivan Ann Currie
Rosie Scott-Lee	Katie Balhaves Kathleen Hanna
Flo Brown	Christine Robinson Barbara O'Sullivan
Kevin Roberts	Kerry Harnett Noah Wright
Andrew Pearce	Maureen McCaughey Beverley Loader
Marc de Jersey	Monica Cook Jean Ellis
Stephen Fisher	Anthony Marston

During Advent and Christmaside we are invited to pray for Openness to the Word of God, for Migrants and Refugees, and for Expectant Mothers.

Readings for this week
Sunday Year B Psalter Week 3



*3rd Week of Advent
"I exult for joy in the Lord,
my soul rejoices in my
God."*

Collections for December 5th/6th - Thank You		
1st	Running of the Parish	£738.45
2nd	Renovation	£519.40

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist		
6.00pm	Angela Holmes	Stuart Fox
	Wendy Winterburn	
8.00am	Frances Heterley	Mike Kennedy
	Jane Gennard	
10.00am	Mary Cook	Anthony Elegado
	Mia Brennan	

Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confessions)
Saturday 10.00am to 11.00am

We welcome into God's Family, Grace Smith who will be Baptised this Sunday at 12 noon.

Last Weekend's retiring collection for Christmas flowers raised £396.56. Thank you for your generosity.

Appeal for Mass Stewards: With Christmas Services coming up we need a few more volunteers to help with stewarding and cleaning at Masses to keep the church Covid secure. If you can help please ring the office on 273485 or email hereford2@rcadc.org Thank You

Christmas Arrangements There will be flowers on the altar but we do not require any holly this year. There will be no Christmas Card folder at the back of Church. Thank you.

Confessions As we are in ADVENT, Fr. Michael will be hearing confessions on Saturday mornings in church from 10am until 11am. Due to social distancing rules, confessions will not be in the confessional but in the sacristy. There will be a church steward on hand to direct you.

SFX Opening for Private Prayer: Opening times are Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays 10am until 11.30am with Mass at 10.15am on Wednesdays.

St. Francis Xavier's Church - Services for Christmas 2020

Thursday 24th December 5.00pm Children's Mass of Christmas 8.00pm 'Midnight' Mass (Streamed)

Friday 25th December 8.00am Mass of Christmas Day

Saturday 26th December 10.00am Parish Mass of Christmas Day (Streamed)
10.00am Mass on St. Stephen's Day.



Congratulations to all of our children from the parish who made their 1st Holy Communion here on Friday 11th December after much delay. How wonderful that they have finally received the Lord in this Sacrament and can now usually wear their communion clothes for the May Procession but they will not get that chance for a while. What about wearing your Communion clothes at whichever of the Christmas Masses you attend? The whole parish can then share in your joy!

Church giving Our Bank details are: Barclays A/c name: Archdiocese of Cardiff Sort Code 20 18 23 A/c number: 3597 5479. Please use your name as a reference and we can claim Gift Aid if you are registered. Although Standing Orders are preferred, donations can also be made online through the Archdiocesan website at: www.rcadc.org/portfolio-item/parish-offertory

Last minute Christmas shopping! From the Cistercian Sisters, Holy Cross Abbey. Under the pandemic restrictions our altar bread business is far from normal. Now we are making Christmas puddings, cards, etc., please visit our website 'We earn our living by the work of our hands, (Rule of St Benedict Chapter 48)' <http://www.hcawhitland.co.uk/>

Belmont Abbey Penitential Service: Monday, 21st December, at 7pm (Please arrive from 6.45 onwards)

200 Club Winter Star Draw and Winners for November and December: Winter Star Draw £100 Richard and Angela Holmes November: 1st Brendan Finlow £25; 2nd Dominica Lawrence £10; 3rd Maureen Bellamy £5; December: 1st Elizabeth Wilson £25; 2nd Annie McCourt £10; 3rd Mrs J Dykes £5. Winners will be contacted by post. Thank you for your continued support. Paul and Brenda.

"The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to give the good news to the poor." (Lk 4:18)

*Live simply so others may simply live
and care for our common home*
Choose a live Christmas tree
See the Parish Website
for more *Cajol* information



THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL.

'Give thanks in all circumstances' may at first blush seem a cruel and absurd instruction. Should we give thanks in a hospice, a third world prison or at the funeral of a friend? Paul is quite insistent in his message to the faithful of Thessalonica: Be joyful always, pray, give thanks...for this is God's will for you. Thank you, then, for Covid-19, for the suspension of Mass and...the people in this life who are driving us to distraction...

Paul's instruction goes right to the heart of the Christian conundrum. Acceptance of Christ's victory over death sets us free. Whoever believes in me shall never die, Jesus tells us. Grasping this truth opens the door to eternal life. What do we do in the mean time, though?

Trying to be happy all the time is foreign to the human condition. We are programmed to jump out of the way of that sabre toothed tiger, to be concerned that he may kill our people. One police officer remarked how worry is normal, adding with a sigh: many people who never worry are usually in prison.

To look and speak of good is instructive. We value the Mass afresh. Good news starts with affirming our delight in this life and the next. Confidence in the future can be engendered by the open recitation of sacred scripture.

St Mark's Gospel features next year at Mass. It's the shortest of the gospels and takes two hours to read. Written a mere 40 years after the resurrection, St Mark's Gospel has an urgency about it. The story Mark tells is packed with drama and action. As part of the fasting and preparation of Advent read it out loud. Approach it as if you have been asked to read it to a group of doubters. Do not explain it or apologise for it. Read it out loud. Proclaim it on a hill top, a park or in the privacy of your own home. Emphasise the drama the way an actor would. It's uplifting and enriching. We grow when we receive and act upon the word of God. Every time you hear St Mark's Gospel next year rejoice in that promise to read it through.

'Those who sow in tears Will reap with songs of joy' Ps. 126

For more articles like this go to Hereford Catholic on Facebook or BorderTales.co.uk

Prayer to St. Michael Holy Michael, Archangel, defend us in the day of battle; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God thrust down to hell Satan and all wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Amen.