

Second Sunday of Advent – Year A

Reading I: Isaiah 11: 1–10

Responsorial Psalm: 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Reading II: Romans 15: 4-9

Gospel: Matthew 3: 1-12

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/120422.cfm>



The Second Sunday of Advent draws our attention to the presence of Jesus in our life every day. John the Baptist calls people to conversion, including each of us. Paul describes how the scriptures were written for our instruction that we might have courage, endurance, and hope. Isaiah presents a vision of what life will be like when the reign of God is fully established.

John the Baptist begins with the same announcements as does Jesus, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt 3: 2, Matt 4: 17B) God's message is consistent. Humans need to reorient their lives away from self-centered goals and actions and take on the orientation of God who is loving and life-giving.

John is presented as the one who announces the promised one for his role is to prepare the way of the Lord. The Jewish expectation at the time is that the prophet Elijah would return to announce the coming of God for Elijah was not presented as dying but only being taken up to God in a fiery chariot. John comes wearing similar clothing to Elijah, animal hair garments with a leather belt; taking his food from nature, and confronting evil and unjust kings. He stands in line with the great prophets of the past who called people to convert.

Even the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees who taught in and led the synagogues, and the Sadducees who organized worship in the Jerusalem temple, John called to repent. They practiced religion and made a living off of their religious service but for many, it did not produce a life of virtue.

John presents a baptism (ritual washing) that expresses a person's desire to change. John also points to the one who is to come from God whose baptism will cleanse and purify like fire and give new life through the Holy Spirit. The call to repentance continues to sound in the heart of all believers each day. The Holy Spirit challenges our hearts when selfish decisions are made and inspire our hearts with new ways to love, to share, and to lift others up.

St Paul highlights the support and encouragement that can be found in the scriptures. They give hope to each person by reminding everyone of God's vision for humanity and of God's presence in our lives. The scriptures help us to think as God does and show us the attitudes that manifest God's ways.

St Paul's direct appeal is for Christians to think in harmony with each other. The divisions among believers are contrary to the vision of each becoming a child of God. Our unity should first be expressed in common worship that we offer to God, giving thanks for every blessing and acknowledging that each one comes from God. As members of the same family, we should welcome one another without regard for race, economic status, position in life, or educational achievement. Christians gather as one family and share their gifts so that all may benefit from God's blessings and work.

Isaiah pictures the reign of the ideal king of Israel. This ideal king will come from the line of Jesse, the father of King David. This king will be gifted by God with gifts. These gifts are

grouped into three areas: wisdom and understanding are gifts of the intellect; counsel and might are practical abilities; and knowledge and fear of the Lord and gifts of piety.¹ This king will also judge and act justly without bias toward the rich or powerful but respect the rights and dignity of each person. This will then restore the human family and all creation to the life-giving balance that God intended in the beginning. All creation will be in harmony with everyone and everything in harmony just as Paul described for the Christian Community. It will only be done by God's action and not the plan of humanity.

Key themes:

Messianic Era

John the Baptist

Conversion and Repentance

Baptism of John vs the Sacrament of Baptism

Holy Spirit

Reflection Questions

What is an area in your life where you to change to make room for God? What help do you need to change?

What are some of the areas of injustice in society or the human community that need to be challenged?

What are some of the divisions in the human family that provoke discord in the Christian Community?

What vision or images describe your hopes for the coming reign of God?

Prayer ideas

For the Church: that through our baptism with Spirit and fire, we may courageously live the Gospel and be instruments for the transformation of the world

For conversion of our deepest selves: that God will help us to look honestly at our lives and guide our process of disengaging from the old habits so that we may live and act in new ways

For the advancement of justice: that God will inspire us with a new understanding of God's justice and help us to show through deeds of compassion that with God, all things are possible

For renewal of our minds and hearts: that the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, of Counsel and Strength, and of Knowledge and Reverence will transform us more and more into children of the light

¹ Fuller, Reginald, *Scripture in Depth*. Liturgical Press.