



Parish of the Holy Eucharist

Small Group Faith Sharing Material
3rd Sunday of Advent—December 14, 2014
Sunday Readings



my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.

The Word of the Lord

Question for Understanding

According to Isaiah, how has the Lord anointed him and why does he rejoice in the Lord?

Question for Faith-Sharing

How has God anointed you and in what ways do you rejoice in the Lord?

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. 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.

(source: The Roman Missal, Third Typical Edition)



Mass Readings

Reading 1

IS 61:1-2A, 10-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God. I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in

Responsorial Psalm

Lk 1: 46-48, 49-50, 53-54

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
R. **My soul rejoices in my God.**

the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy.
R. **My soul rejoices in my God.**

The Light is
ON for You.



Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Confession

Advent is a time for Celebrating the Sacrament of Confession. **The week of December 15, from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM** the priests will be available in Churches throughout the diocese for the Celebration of Reconciliation.

The Schedule for the Parish of the Holy Eucharist:
MONDAY, DECEMBER 15—Holy Martyrs
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16—St. Jude
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16—Sacred Heart
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17— St. Gregory

Confessions are heard every Saturday at 3:15 PM in the Church where the 4:00 PM Mass is celebrated. Confessions are also heard by appointment by calling the priest.

Gospel

Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'*" as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord

Question for Understanding

What did John the Baptist say is his role in the coming of Jesus?

Question for Faith-Sharing

What do you need to do in your life to "make straight the way of the Lord?"

Reading 2

1 Thes 5: 16-24

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil. May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.

The Word of the Lord

Question for Understanding

How does St. Paul say we are to remain blameless until the coming of the Lord?

Question for Faith-Sharing

Which of St. Paul's statements challenge you the most this Advent season?

Commentary

John

Surprise! John's Gospel is used instead of Mark for the Third Sunday in Advent since John provides a fuller picture of the ministry of John the Baptist as preparing for the coming of Christ. The Church finds a more complete source wherever possible to emphasize the work of the Baptist as the Coming approaches.

There were some disciples of John who had not followed his advice as he pointed to the One Who Was To Come. They were still looking for John to come back from the dead. Early Christians had to reach out to these who

were still preaching the repentance called for by John but were not centered on Jesus as the Christ.

John's Gospel always has harsh words for *the Jews*. This refers not to the Jewish people in general but to the leaders in Judea who refused to hear the message of Jesus. We must be careful not to apply the harshness of this passage to all Jewish people in general. Both Jesus and John were *laymen*, as it were, in Judaism. They were not priests of the Temple. They did not seek badges of honor. They simply proclaimed, "The love of God is the only asset worth anything at all." Being loved by God gives us our value, not the positions we hold in the Church or in society.

John claims that the right to baptize has come to him from God who has sent him and not from any certification at the hands of religious leaders. He is not the Christ; he is not Elijah; he is not the Prophet. He is simply one sent by God to point to the Christ who is to come. This Gospel wants its hearers to know that they too get their authenticity, not from established religious structures but from the God whose message they bear.

The right to ministry for members of the Church today does not come first from any decree of the Church granting it any inner authenticity. Its inner authority comes from the power of the Holy Spirit received in baptism and developed in prayer and in service. The Church can only direct the ministries of its members; it does not create them nor grant them out of its own resources. The call and the gift of ministry come from God. The Church has a right and duty to test, to verify, and to organize the gifts of the faithful. God empowers; the Church guides and directs.

Isaiah

Three different writers from different time periods have contributed to what we know today as the Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39 from the great Isaiah of Jerusalem, before the Babylonian Exile (587-537 BCE); Chapters 40-55 during the period of Exile; Chapters 56-66 toward the end or shortly after the Exile. There is a deeply felt sense of hope after the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple. Isaiah witnesses to God's truth that God will come personally to sustain the chosen ones. By extension, we apply this prophecy to Jesus who is God "in person," coming to sustain the weary. In Israel, a jubilee year was a time of great blessing when God showered blessings on the poor and all debts were forgiven. The Messiah comes to establish justice and bring relief to those who are poor. The *bride and groom* theme suggests a time of fertility and abundance of food.

1 Thessalonians

Early Christians worried that the Lord might come and worried that he might not come! If he comes, who will survive? Paul says that strong and loving community life can provide support in the expectation of the Second Coming. Speculation and anxiety about the Coming are of no benefit. *Spirit, soul and body* do not refer to different components of the person, as if there were separable from one another. The expression means "the whole person in all its dimensions. Of all the books of the Christian testament, this was the very first to be written, around the year 50-51. It reflects some of the earliest concerns among the followers of Christ.



CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

See The Catechism of the Catholic Church #1778-1796

The rights of conscience have always been controverted both in Church law and in civil law. Can anyone, Church or state, coerce me into doing something I believe to be wrong? Who is to decide what is right and what is wrong?

In the 20th century, we saw the Nuremberg Trials in the late 1940s where German leaders from the Nazi era were convicted of war crimes even though they claimed they were just following orders. The Military Tribunal said there was a higher law which took precedence over the orders of men. Implicit in these judgments was the claim that there is a *law of conscience* which perceives rights and wrongs in the objective order no matter what the civil or the military laws might hold.

Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr., practiced *civil disobedience* in response to unjust civil laws. They appealed to a *higher law*, the law of conscience. Christian martyrs went to their deaths during the past 2,000 years rather than to comply with human laws they considered contrary to the law of God. A

The Catholic tradition holds that conscience is the final arbiter of the rightness and wrongness of human conduct. Final judgment will be based on our perception that what we did was right or was wrong according to the law of God. *Conscience* is that faculty by which we are *aware* of the innermost rightness or wrongness of certain behaviors. The Church teaches that the human heart can and does know instinctively what is right and what is wrong.

We cannot make something *right* if it is inherently



wrong. But we cannot be judged or faulted for believing something was right even though it was objectively wrong. Conscience needs to be guided by teachers who have been given the responsibility to teach what is right and what is wrong. The Church claims that right for itself. A Catholic will seek guidance from Church teachings in the formation of conscience. A Catholic will ask advice from mature and experienced Christians in order to form a right conscience. But, ultimately, conscience will be the guide.

Each of us has a responsibility to develop our *conscience awareness* according to the revealed will of God in Holy Scripture and according to the teachings of the Church as articulated in the moral tradition of the Church.

Firmly rooted in the faith community and seeking to be loyal to the authentic tradition of the Catholic Church, we may consult other voices; but, finally, we must decide, personally.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the primary mission of the Church? To grant holiness or to point to the holiness which God has already given? Does the Church make people holy or does the Church guide people to the holiness of God? Of course, Christ is at work in the sacraments of the Church which produce holiness, but the Church did not create those sacraments; the Church serves as custodian of the means of holiness. Would you say that the mission of the Church is to do both?

2. In what way does your parish community, your family, your faith-sharing group, have a responsibility to proclaim the Good News that Jesus Christ is Son of God, Lord and Savior of the world? How does the group carry out that responsibility? Does proclamation hold priority of place among all the other responsibilities of the parish, the family, etc.? How can you tell if the emphasis is first on proclaiming the Good News?

SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

In your last-minute planning for Christmas, you might be able to find a charity or a family which can use a half-hour or an hour of help: answering the phone, babysitting, sharing a pre-cooked meal, or some other act of kindness. Personal presence to a lonely person, a cheerful phone conversation with a shut-in, a family member you have not spoken with recently. Reaching out in love.



Watch the Video

Please watch the reflection on the weekly readings prepared by the staff at Parish of the Holy Eucharist. It can be found on the parish website at www.pothe.org or you may obtain copies of the DVD at the parish office. See www.POTHE.org to watch the video or use the DVD provided by the parish.

Prayers of Intercession

Conclude with the "Our Father"

Credits

Opening Prayer. *Missale Romanum, Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 2008. *Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 2011.

Readings for Mass. Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC.

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Catechism of the Catholic Church