



# Parish of the Holy Eucharist

Small Group Faith Sharing Material  
2nd Sunday of Advent—December 7, 2014  
Sunday Readings



rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

*The Word of the Lord*

## Question for Understanding

What message does Isaiah say should be cried out to the cities of Judah?

## Question for Faith-Sharing

Which part of Isaiah's message resonates with you and which does not resonate with you?

## Opening Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company. 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 40:1-5, 9-11

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord GOD, who

## Responsorial Psalm

Ps 85: 9-10, 11-12, 13-14

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims;  
the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people.  
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,  
glory dwelling in our land.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Kindness and truth shall meet;  
justice and peace shall kiss.  
Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
and justice shall look down from heaven.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

The LORD himself will give his benefits;  
our land shall yield its increase.  
Justice shall walk before him,  
and prepare the way of his steps.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

## Reading 2

2 Peter 3:8-14

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

*The Word of the Lord*

### Question for Understanding

How does St. Peter describe the coming of the Lord?

### Question for Faith-Sharing

How eager are you to be found without spot or blemish before Jesus?

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## Gospel

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."* John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

*The Gospel of the Lord*

## Question for Understanding

What is the role of John the Baptist?

## Question for Faith-Sharing

What are ways you are preparing the way of the Lord?

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## Commentary

### Mark

Mark introduces an entirely new form of literature: a *gospel*, meaning *good news*. Perhaps the most original of all the Christian testament writers, Mark creates a new vehicle to carry the message of a uniquely new event: Jesus the Christ, Son of God. The word *gospel* was used in Greek by secular writers to mean the good news of the birth of a new emperor, for example. For Mark, the Good News is not merely *about* Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus the Christ *is* the Good News. The book consists of narratives and sayings. It is not merely a biography. It is a proclamation that this Jesus truly is the Son of God. So, the title of the book!

A messenger from God was expected to announce that the "end" was at hand. Something entirely new was to



## 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.

be introduced by God. Many in Israel truly believed that a divine intervention was about to occur. The community at Qumran surely thought so. Ritual baptisms were practiced there and by other Jews to signify a complete change in the direction of one's life. Converts from the Gentile world were ritually washed clean when they entered Judaism.

John the Baptist asserts that mere physical descent from Abraham is not enough to assure salvation. **People must repent.** Repentance means more than just being sorry for one's sins. It means a completely new way of living, a radical about-turn, a transformation at the very core of one's existence. Since the recreating power of God is required for this profound transformation to take place, John speaks of baptism in the Holy Spirit. The bath of water given by humans will not reach deeply enough. "One greater than I" is a code expression for the intervention of God himself.

As Christians, we live in the present moment, convinced that God is to be found in the concrete experience of the here and now. We have no other time in which to lead a real life. The present is the *sacrament* which enables us to encounter the God of all creation. But we live in a present which has a past and will have a future. We recall the past out of which Christ first came among us, and we look forward to the future when the Risen One will come again in glory.

## Isaiah

Today's quotation is taken from the so-called Second Isaiah (Chapters 40-55), a section which is known as the Book of Consolation. It was written during the Babylonian Exile (c. 550 BCE) and promises God's power to restore Israel to its homeland. The message is about highway building, making straight and level the road that leads to Jerusalem. God himself is coming to travel that road. The highway will be God's own highway. The people will travel that road with God on their return home. The time of their exile is over; God will live among them again. Great comfort will ensue, along with joy and fearlessness. That is the "good news."

## 2 Peter

The last to be written of all the books in the Christian Testament (c. 110-115 CE), 2 Peter claims the growing authority of the long-since deceased Peter (c. 64 CE) to resolve disputes in the Church. The Second Coming was being delayed. Why? Some were claiming there was

no afterlife; some were claiming God had no power to punish or to reward. This author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, asserts that the reason Christ has not returned yet is to give sinners more time to repent. Just as God had allowed another thousand years to Adam after having said that he would die if he ate from the Forbidden Tree, so now, people have been given a respite so they can change their ways and return to God. The Letter shares the view of both the Jews and the Stoics at the time: the world will end in a conflagration of fire. But this Letter goes beyond that view: it hopes in a new heaven and a new earth. Christians are called to live good lives now so that Christ will not delay any longer.

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## CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

**See The Catechism of the Catholic Church #888-92; 2033,2049-50; 2034,2039**

The Church teaches authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord who lives in its midst and continues to work through the various ministries of the Christian community. We call the teaching ministry of the Church the *magisterium*, a Latin word which means *the unit that does the teaching*. The Church assumes a magisterial role whenever it teaches what God has revealed to the world.

*Magisterium* is exercised in various ways and with varying degrees of solemnity. Every family passing on the faith it has received from the previous generation engages in *magisterium*. The catechists in the parish, those who share faith with the catechumens, those who bring the word of God to the sick and the homebound along with the Eucharistic bread, all these are working in the ministry of *teaching*. The bishop, priest, and deacon in the homily after the Gospel proclamation are exercising *magisterium* in the Church. Theologians too are part of the *magisterium* when, in faithfulness to the Church and to its doctrine, they explore the inner meaning of divine revelation and seek to articulate it to a changing world and an evolving culture.

There is a more solemn expression of *magisterium* when the bishops of the Church, in union with the Bishop of Rome, pronounce a teaching to be held by all the faithful; or when the pope alone, in moral union with the body of the world's bishops, gives a definition of beliefs concerning divine faith or moral guidance meant for the whole Church. On certain occasions and concerning some especially crucial topics, this *magisterium* is called *Extra-Ordinary* and is referred to as *infallible*.

The whole Church as teacher of divine truth rests its claims to that ministry on the charge given it by Christ: "Go into the whole world and teach the Good News. ... And I will be with you until the end of the world." Christ continues a living ministry of teaching the Gospel through the ministry of the Church which is his Body on earth. Christ speaks the words of salvation to our times through the words which we utter in his name.

"He who hears you hears me." The prophetic voice of the Church must ring out today with faithfulness to the message of the Gospel. The forms of thought and the words need to be framed in the idioms of contemporary culture in order to be understood by the people of our times. New words can be found for old truths.

How can the Church be silent in the face of human hunger for truth, for hope, for the consolation of the love of God?

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## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. From what you know of the spiritual condition of the people to whom John addressed his message, do you see any similarities with the people of the world in which we live today? Do we, too, need the transforming hand of God to touch us for a renewal and a new life in the Spirit? What are some of our needs that only God can supply? What would repentance mean, concretely, for the people of this culture and this way of life in America?

## SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Select a small project of Christian service to the poor which your group might be able to accomplish before Christmas.

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## 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](http://www.pothe.org) or you may obtain copies of the DVD at the parish office. See [www.POTHE.org](http://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