

Second Sunday of Advent, December 4, 2022

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading — Isaiah 11:1-10

1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins. 6 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. 9 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.

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

R. (cf. 7) Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king's son; he shall govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has no one to help him. He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor he shall save.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

May his name be blessed forever; as long as the sun his name shall remain. In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed; all the nations shall proclaim his happiness.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

Second Reading — Romans 15:4-9

4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise thee among the Gentiles, and sing to thy name."

Gospel Reading — Matthew 3:1-12

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." 4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit that befits repentance, 9 and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and

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gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Advent is a season of waiting and watching. Paul, in 1Thessalonians 1:1-3, describes the inner conversion of the Thessalonians as a “work of faith and labor of love, and steadfastness of hope.” Later in verse 9-10 he explains how this inner conversion is expressed outwardly in their lives. They “turned to God from idols,” they “served a living and true God” and they waited “for his Son from heaven.” It is the steadfastness of hope and active waiting for the return of Jesus that this week’s Scriptures address. As we enter the season of Advent the eyes of our heart naturally turn to Jesus’ incarnation that we will celebrate and make present once again in a few weeks. How marvelous is the story of our salvation. Israel, a people not only conquered politically but also conquered by unbelief and sin, are rescued in a most unique and extraordinary way; by the birth of a defenseless babe. The coming Messiah-Savior was almost missed by Israel in spite of their years of prayer, watchfulness, and anticipation, for he came in a most unexpected way and at an unexpected time. As we celebrate that First Advent of Jesus with all its unexpected miraculous elements it should remind us that his second Advent, his impending return, could also take place at any time in an equally unexpected and miraculous way. The Thessalonian Christians, whom we previously mentioned, waited for Jesus’ return from heaven with “assurance” and “steadfast hope.” However, their waiting did not consist of sitting around twiddling their thumbs. Theirs was an active anticipation that propelled them into the tasks of proclaiming the Gospel and reaping a harvest for the Kingdom of God. Because they knew that Jesus could return at any moment, they were genuinely sincere about their faith and prudently active in sharing their faith throughout the region, even to the point of patiently enduring persecution. The Second Reading gives us good advice on how to prepare for Jesus’ Second Advent, “For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” As we celebrate the Advent Season we should become increasingly aware that our salvation is nearer than ever. Salvation from the penalty of sin and enslavement to sin is, of course, already present in Jesus Christ and through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. However, our fallen nature, like an unholy gravity, exerts a continuing downward pull that we must labor to resist. Therefore, each day that we live we are a day closer to the fullness of salvation when we shall be freed from this downward force and set forever free to enjoy the God of our salvation. The Advent Season should remind us to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. “Wherefore, let us honor this sacred day, the day on which the author of our salvation appeared. Whom the wise men revered as an infant in his crib, let us worship as the all-powerful One in heaven. Just as they offered to the Lord mystical kinds of gifts from their treasures, let us bring forth from our hearts things that are worthy of God. Although he himself bestows all good thing, he nevertheless asks for the fruit of our effort. For the kingdom of heaven comes not to those who sleep but to those who work and watch according to the Lord’s command.”¹ Jesus’ Second Advent is as sure as was Jesus’ First Advent. Two of this week’s Scripture readings alert us to the unexpectedness of Jesus’ Second Advent. We are encouraged therefore to “watch” and “be ready.” Many Israelites missed out on the joyousness of Jesus’ First Advent and were unable to exalt with people like Anna and Simeon who had remained alert and watchful for the Messiah even into old age. What a shame it will be, we will miss out on so much, if we, due to complacency and preoccupation with other things, are unprepared for his return.

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INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading —

1. In light of the above passage, why do you think we are hesitant to fully turn over our lives to Christ?

Second Reading —

2. What attitude or mind-set is revealed in this passage from Romans?

Gospel Reading —

3. What has been your experience with repentance? How do you feel about the need for repentance?
4. Describe “fruit that befits repentance.”
5. How does Jesus’ “baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire” affect us today?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.