

**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**

Is 35:1-6.10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult, let the wasteland rejoice and bloom, let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil, let it rejoice and sing for joy.

The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God.

Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees and say to all faint hearts, "Courage! Do not be afraid.

"Look your God is coming, vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; he is coming to save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed, then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy, for those the Lord has ransomed shall return.

They will come to Zion shouting for joy, everlasting joy in their faces; joy and gladness will go with them and sorrow and lament be ended.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Ps 145

Response:

Come, Lord, and save us.

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed. It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R.)

2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down, the Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan. (R.)

3. It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

Jm 5:7-10

A reading from the letter of St James.

Be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring

rains! You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates. For your example, brothers, in submitting with patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

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**

Mt 11:2-11

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?" Jesus answered, "Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me."

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is."

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 was 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.

# Sunday Message

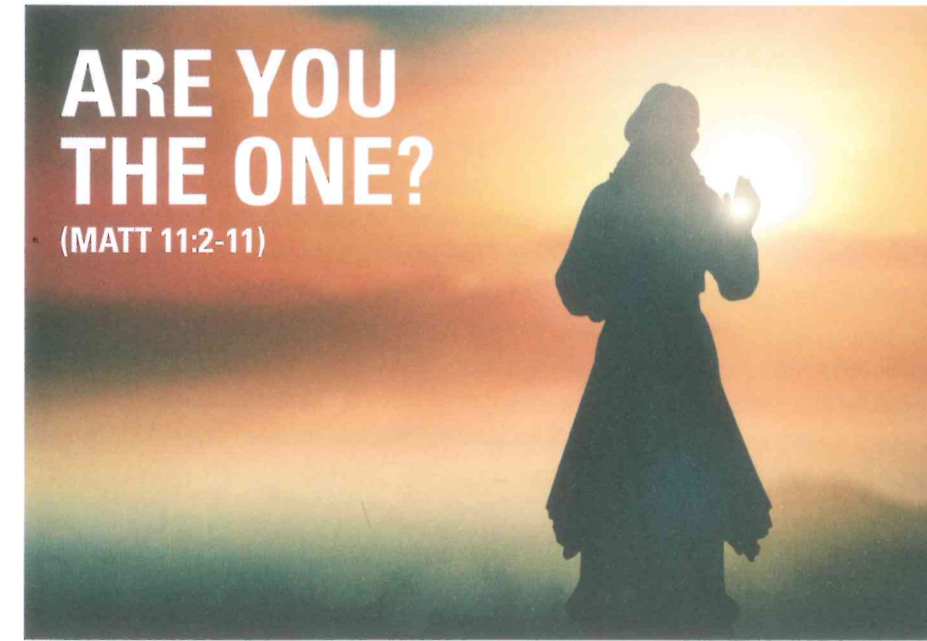
15 DECEMBER 2019

3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**THE WORD**

Year A • Season Colour: Rose (or Purple) • Psalter Week 3

## ARE YOU THE ONE?

(MATT 11:2-11)



In today's Gospel, we learn that John the Baptist has been thrown into prison. He has heard about Jesus' activities and wonders if Jesus is the one who is to come.

Matthew presents Jesus as offering evidence that he is the Messiah (the Christ) through his works of power in healing. These show God's power breaking through into human life, where that life is impaired or endangered, and this is the coming of the Kingdom. Not everyone will accept the evidence of their own eyes and Jesus will be rejected by many members of the religious establishment and of his own family, and he pronounces a blessing on those who do not lose faith.

John is in prison probably because he was attracting key figures in the service of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Judea, such as soldiers and tax officials: Herod would perceive him as becoming a rival focus of influence and hence a threat to his authority and rule. Some people would see the Messiah as a political/military figure who would provide precisely such leadership: Matthew shows that Jesus as the Christ would not conform to such worldly expectations, hence the list of healings which he gives as signs that the Kingdom of God had arrived.

However important John the Baptist may have been, his era is now over, and the least in the kingdom is greater than he is. He is, in a sense, the last of the prophets, one who remains steadfast to his beliefs and the ultimate witness, and it is for that reason that the church honours him as a saint in the Christian tradition for his part in the Gospel story of Jesus. ■

**DO**

Consider celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of your preparation for the Feast of Our Lord's Nativity.

**LEARN**

*Christ* is a Greek term meaning anointed.

*Messiah* is a Hebrew term meaning anointed.

In popular thought, the Messiah would be a military hero who would liberate the people of Israel from Roman rule.

**REFLECT**

There seem to have been differing ideas as to what kind of person the Messiah would be. Today's Gospel presents Jesus as revealing the presence of the Kingdom of God through healing and the proclaiming of the Good News. This is the mission which he will entrust to the disciples later in the narrative.

The miracle stories in the Gospel illustrate the Kingdom breaking into human life. The mission to proclaim God's love and concern for human beings did not end with the immediate disciples of Jesus but has been given to his disciples down through the ages. We, the members of the church, are called upon to be missionary disciples wherever we find ourselves. It is perhaps easy to see the church as a fortress under siege: but the picture of the Kingdom is rather one of going on the offensive, of attacking those situations where people are suffering, whether it be sickness, injustice or prejudice, anywhere that human life is less than it should be. Maybe we should think of being redeemed or saved in a wider context than individual, personal sin: the Bible thinks in terms of being a member of a group, the people of Israel or one of the disciples of Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus brings responsibilities towards our brothers and sisters. ■

**SAY**

The least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist.

(see Matt 11:11)



Stained glass in Catholic church in Dublin showing John the Baptist

