

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

*There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.*

A man came, sent by God.

His name was John.

He came as a witness,

as a witness to speak for the light,

so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light,

only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:

'Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

#### ■ The Gospel of the Lord.

#### A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL



Reproduction of this bulletin in any form prohibited. Published with ecclesiastical approval by ST PAULS PUBLICATIONS, PO Box 906, Strathfield NSW 2135. Tel 02 9394 3400 Fax 02 9394 3444. Scripture readings from the Jerusalem Bible, published and © 1966, by Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Co. Inc. are used by permission of the publishers. Psalm text from *The Psalms, A New Translation*, © 1963, The Grail (England), HarperCollins. New translation of the Order of Mass from *The Roman Missal* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved. Artwork by Sr Dorothy Woodward rsj. Layout, commentaries and illustrations © St Pauls Publications, 2020. No 1855. Website: www.stpauls.com.au

# Breaking Open the Word



# THE SAVING WORD

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT / B

13 DECEMBER 2020

## JESUS, GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

The build-up to Christmas and the festive season has a way of leaving many people tired and stressed as many tasks call for our attention. It is probably impossible to avoid much of this as the feast of Christmas marks the end of the year and the beginning of the summer break. The readings for today can help each of us to determine more clearly what are our major priorities as Christians in preparing for Christmas.

Within the readings today two dimensions of our preparation are stressed. The first is the call to witness to our faith by sharing in God's life-giving, freeing, and healing love. The second dimension is that of finding time to give thanks and praise to God for the gifts we have received through the presence of Jesus among us.

Isaiah's mission of proclaiming liberty and God's love to those in exile comes out of his own experience of this love. Because of this experience, he is able to be a witness to what God is doing in his own day. John the Baptist provides us with a powerful example of a person of faith who is prepared to stand up and bear witness.

As Paul concludes the letter to the Thessalonians he reminds them that the best way to prepare for the Lord's return is by living at peace with one another and being constant in their prayer. One relationship nourishes the other. Making time for the Lord in prayer enables us to make time for each other.

## FIRST READING

Isa 61:1-2, 10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

*I exult for joy in the Lord.*

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.

'I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,

he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity, like a bridegroom wearing his wreath, like a bride adorned in her jewels.

'For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will the Lord make both integrity and praise spring up in the sight of nations.'

#### ■ The word of the Lord.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Lk 1:46-50, 53-54

**R.** My soul rejoices in my God.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord,/ my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour./ He looks on his servant in her nothingness;/ henceforth all ages will call me blessed. **R.**

2. The Almighty works marvels for me./ Holy his name!/ His mercy is from age to age,/ on those who fear him. **R.**

3. He fills the starving with good things,/ sends the rich away empty./ He protects Israel, his servant,/ remembering his mercy. **R.**



## SECOND READING

1 Thess 5:16-24

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

*May you all be kept blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

#### ■ The word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**The spirit of the Lord is upon me; he sent me to bring Good News to the poor. Alleluia!**