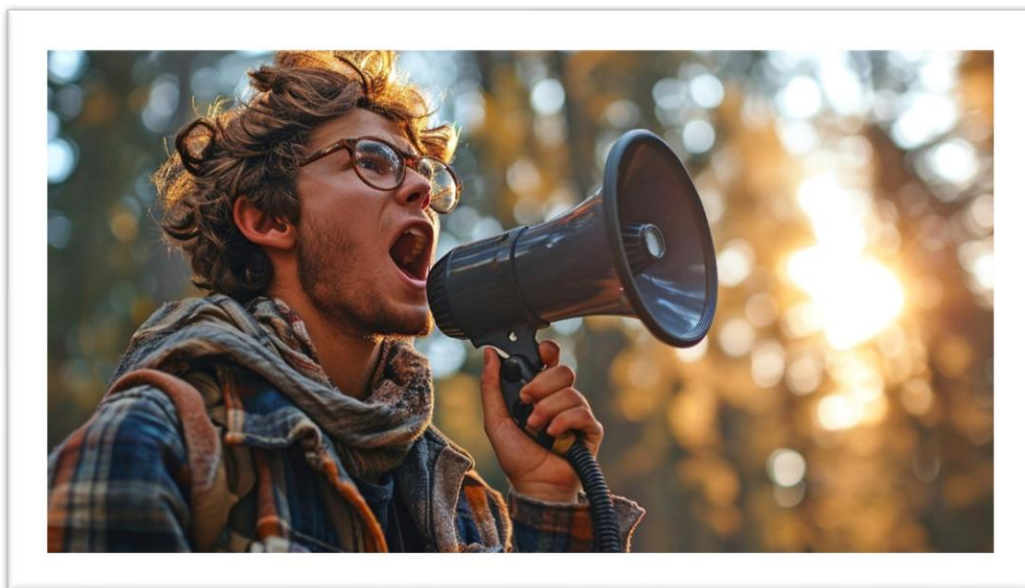


# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 8 DECEMBER 2024



## COLLECT

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.

## READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

John the Baptist is the 'voice crying in the wilderness'. Luke's list of the political leaders at the time when John began to proclaim repentance spells out the mighty challenge John was up against.

We always hear the good news in the context of the world events of our time. That means, for example, that we cannot hear Baruch's exuberant account of the exiles' home-coming without thinking of the millions of people languishing in refugee camps around the world. We yearn for such a safe and jubilant return home for displaced people in our own day. Joyous expectation is the mood and tone for Advent.

Those who call for a new Church and a new human order may feel that, like the Baptist, they are voices crying in the wilderness. Yet we must cry out for social justice for all. The season of Advent gives us fresh heart. It's a graced time for the powerful renewal of our hope and faith.

## A reading from the prophet Baruch 5:1–9

Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress,  
put on the beauty of the glory of God for ever,  
wrap the cloak of the integrity of God around you,  
put the diadem of the glory of the Eternal  
on your head:

since God means to show your splendour to every  
nation under heaven,  
since the name God gives you for ever will be,  
'Peace through integrity, and honour through  
devotedness'.

Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights  
and turn your eyes to the east:  
see your sons reassembled from west and east  
at the command of the Holy One,  
jubilant that God has remembered them.  
Though they left you on foot,  
with enemies for an escort,  
now God brings them back to you  
like royal princes carried back in glory.  
For God has decreed the flattening  
of each high mountain, of the everlasting hills,  
the filling of the valleys to make the ground level  
so that Israel can walk in safety  
under the glory of God.  
And the forests and every fragrant tree will  
provide shade for Israel at the command of God;  
for God will guide Israel in joy  
by the light of his glory  
with his mercy and integrity for escort.

## Responsorial Psalm

## Ps 125

**R.** The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.

When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage,  
it seemed like a dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
on our lips there were songs. **R.**

The heathens themselves said:  
'What marvels the Lord worked for them!  
What marvels the Lord worked for us!  
Indeed we were glad. **R.**

Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage  
as streams in dry land.

Those who are sowing in tears  
will sing when they reap. **R.**

They go out, they go out, full of tears  
carrying seed for the sowing:  
they come back, they come back, full of song,  
carrying their sheaves. **R.**

## First Reading

The people in exile departed on foot with enemies for  
an escort. Now God will bring them back in joy with his  
mercy and integrity for their escort.

This text is pulsing with energy and enthusiasm; it  
ignites a blaze of hope in the heart of a city lamenting  
the loss of her exiled children. This is exactly how the  
passage should be read. There are up-beat and  
stirring images for a people who are at a low ebb,  
weak or wounded – perhaps like some of us in the  
Church today.

The passage is poetic in its imagery: beautiful clothes  
and jewellery, hills and valleys, flowering trees and  
forests. Use these images to proclaim the celebratory  
message of joyful hope. They resonate with those of  
Isaiah which we will hear in the gospel.

Underline some of the words you will stress: beauty,  
integrity (it occurs three times), jubilant, safety... Allow  
the radiant glory of God to shine through as you read.  
Slow down at the end to express the tenderness of  
God's care.

## Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 125/126 picks up the theme of liberation from  
bondage which gave us such joy in the first reading. So  
now the response acclaims that we *are filled with joy*.

Note how strongly the psalm insists that this  
deliverance is God's work. It is not due to human  
interventions. We sing and laugh because of the great  
things the Lord has done for us. It is like a dream.  
What we sowed in tears, we reap with singing.

The third verse shifts somewhat to form a prayer on  
our lips: *Deliver us, O Lord...* This should be sung/said  
with the intensity of pleading. It contrasts with the  
exultation: *Indeed we were glad*. For the rest of the  
psalm, with the images of sowing and reaping, we  
remember all that God has done for us and our tears  
are changed into song.

Because the response falls into two parts, the  
cantor/reader will need to use their intonation with  
care to make sure the congregation hears it in full  
before they all join in the song.

**A reading from the letter of St Paul  
to the Philippians 1:4–6, 8–11**

Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes. God knows how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ Jesus loves you. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.

**A reading from the Gospel  
according to Luke 3:1–6**

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness:  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley will be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be laid low,  
winding ways will be straightened  
and rough roads made smooth.  
And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

**Second Reading**

Paul is writing to the Christians at Philippi from prison (this is in verse 7 which has been omitted from the reading). He is obviously very fond of this community where he had ministered. He says he misses them and loves them.

He has heard that the community is facing some challenges: internal divisions caused by a certain self-centeredness on the part of some. So he urges them to be generous and to deepen their unity and love. This is Paul's prayer for the community. He asks that they will be wise in knowing and doing what is best. The idea of being ready links it to the Advent season.

It is a good habit for readers to locate the Lectionary reading in the original context of the Bible. Next week the second reading is also from Philippians and it is a short letter. Read the whole to see how it sheds light on the way it could be best proclaimed.

Readers should present this text quietly, moderately and with warm sincerity. Make good use of pause because some of the sentences are quite long.

**Gospel**

*Rend the heavens and come down,  
O God of the ages!*

This gospel passage presents a sudden surprise. In a very concrete and specific world situation, the word of God breaks in. It happens not through the important world leaders but through a very down-to-earth character – John the Baptist who is living with utter simplicity in the wilderness. He received the revelation and then proceeded to proclaim a baptism for repentance, that is, calling for a conversion of heart.

The long list of rulers sets the scene for this surprise. It should be read in a matter of fact reporting style, until the moment of revelation (*the word of God came...*) when the tone changes to one of wonder. Check the pronunciation of unusual words in the Pronunciation Guide at the end of this book.

Luke explains the meaning of John the Baptist's ministry by quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah. This is a preparation for the coming of the Lord. It identifies a key theme of Advent – patient waiting. While we wait for the story of Jesus' birth, Luke takes us some decades ahead as John the Baptist prepares for Jesus' public ministry.

The Isaiah imagery is similar to the prophet Baruch. This reading should also take up its mood of energy and joy.

Following the RNJB and the NRSV, the words "all mankind" could be read "all flesh".

# CONCLUDING PRAYER

## **Solemn Blessing for Advent**

May the almighty and merciful God,  
by whose grace we have placed our faith  
in the First Coming of his Only Begotten Son  
and yearn for his coming again  
sanctify us by the radiance of Christ's Advent  
and enrich us with his blessing.

**Amen.**

As we run the race of this present life,  
may he make us firm in faith,  
joyful in hope and active in charity.

**Amen.**

So that, rejoicing now with devotion  
at the Redeemer's coming in the flesh,  
we may be endowed with the rich reward of eternal life  
when he comes again in majesty.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Advent, *The Roman Missal* p. 709)

*An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.*

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### FIRST READING ( NRSV)

#### **A reading from the book of the prophet Baruch 5:1–9**

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,  
and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.  
Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;  
put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;  
for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven.  
For God will give you evermore the name,  
"Righteous Peace, Godly Glory."

Arise, Jerusalem, stand upon the height;  
look toward the east,  
and see your children gathered from west and east  
at the word of the Holy One,  
rejoicing that God has remembered them.  
For they went out from you on foot,  
led away by their enemies;  
but God will bring them back to you,  
carried in glory, as on a royal throne.

For God has ordered that every high mountain  
and the everlasting hills be made low  
and the valleys filled up, to make level ground,  
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.  
The woods and every fragrant tree  
have shaded Israel at God's command.  
For God will lead Israel with joy,  
in the light of his glory,  
with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM ( NRSV)

Psalm 126.1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5, 6 (R.3)

**R.** The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.  
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy. **R.**

Then it was said among the nations,  
“The Lord has done great things for them.”  
The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced. **R.**

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,  
like the watercourses in the desert of the Negev.  
May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy. **R.**

Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves. **R.**

## SECOND READING ( NRSV)

**A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Philippians 1:3–6, 8–11**

My brothers and sisters,  
I thank my God every time I remember you,  
constantly praying with joy  
in every one of my prayers for all of you,  
because of your sharing in the gospel  
from the first day until now.

I am confident of this,  
that the one who began a good work among you  
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

For God is my witness,  
how I long for all of you  
with the compassion of Christ Jesus.  
And this is my prayer,  
that your love may overflow more and more  
with knowledge and full insight  
so that in the day of Christ  
you may be pure and blameless,  
having produced the harvest of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ  
for the glory and praise of God.

## GOSPEL ( NRSV)

### A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke 3:1–6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius,  
when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea,  
and Herod was ruler of Galilee,  
and his brother Philip  
ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,  
and Lysanias ruler of Abilene,  
during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiphas,  
the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

He went into all the region around the Jordan,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,  
as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,  
"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"