

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Luke 1:46-50, 53-54; Response: Isaiah 61:10)

ANTIPHON: My soul rejoices in my God.

RESPONSE: My soul rejoices in my God.

LECTOR: 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.**

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

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he sent me to bring Good News to the poor. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

TODAY'S READINGS Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

NEXT WEEK (4th Sunday Advent, Year B) 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16; Ps 88; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

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*God's flock will
not go without*



December 17 2023 3rd Sunday Advent Year B

For centuries, the Jewish people had treasured the words of prophets like Isaiah. They would have had the promises we see in today's gospel and first reading inscribed on their minds and hearts.

Isaiah, particularly, spoke of the promise of God's decisive response to the suffering of his people and to evil in the world. Through Isaiah, God promised his people that, in the "year of favour from the Lord and the day of vindication", he would "reveal his glory", "feed his flock like a shepherd" and "gather the lambs in his arms". On that day, God would raise a king from the house of David, whom he would anoint to "bring good news to the poor", "bind up hearts that are broken" and "proclaim liberty to captives".

And after years of waiting, John the Baptist was telling his people that the day was arriving.

By quoting Isaiah 40, John casts himself as Isaiah's prophesied "voice crying out in the wilderness". John proclaims that he is the herald for the moment when, as Isaiah describes, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together".

The mention of God's glory is a crucial point, as the glory of the Lord was often described in the Old Testament as a pillar of consuming fire that showed God's strength and holiness. This glory would go before them in extraordinary moments of salvation and deliverance, such as during the Exodus, or moments of the revelation of God's will, such as the giving of

the Law at Sinai. God's presence was so holy and mighty that when it appeared before them, it needed to be concealed from the people of Israel in a pillar of cloud or, later, in the Temple.

The prophets spoke forward to a day when God's glory would be revealed in a way that was no longer concealed but fully disclosed for all to see. John the Baptist's quoting of Isaiah calls to mind this promise of the day when the one true God would dwell among them without barrier or division between them.

So, when John the Baptist explains that he is preparing people to meet "the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie", he is describing this person as the revelation of God's glory, coming with the power and holiness of God himself.

Through Jesus, the glory of God witnessed in the gospels is not the fiery presence of the Old Testament but the radiance of the character of God, the grace and truth about which Moses heard and Isaiah witnessed, in the person and life of Jesus.

In Jesus, who John the Baptist will soon reveal as the "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world", we can know the God who is so powerful, holy and unlike us that there should be barriers between us. But we know him now as God with us, anointing us with the same Spirit that Isaiah promised would anoint the Messiah.

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