

2nd Sunday of Advent Year A

THE GOSPEL Matthew 3:1-12



He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John cried out in
the desert,

Prepare! Reshape your life!
Change your mind, change your heart!
The one is coming who is the very Spirit of God!

Christ, we want to have all these.

Talk to our hearts.
Set us on fire
with flames
that are your Spirit.

THE FIRST READING Isaiah 11:1-10



*A shoot shall sprout from the root of Jesse.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.*

Jesus,
we wait for you.

Pour your Spirit into our lives,
like water rushing
down to the
sea.

Fill us
with your
gifts of wisdom,
understanding, counsel,
strength, knowledge, wonder and awe.

Reshape us with your love,
your own love.

Come, Lord Jesus,
come.

THE SECOND READING Romans 15:4-9



*Father,
as Christ embraces all,
give us the grace to welcome one another.*

*Let our prayers sing harmony to each other
and together call praise to you,
each doing its part to bring
peace to this earth.*

*Your gifts of wisdom,
understanding, counsel,
strength, knowledge, wonder and awe.*

*Reshape us with your love,
your own love.*

Come, Lord Jesus, come. (Anne Osdieck)

REFLECTION -

John called the Pharisees and Sadducees vipers, singling them out from the great crowds of people from Jerusalem and all Judaea? They thought they were above reproach in keeping the Law. However, the ordinary people listen to John's preaching, confess their sins and plead for God's mercy participating in John's new ceremony of washing – water symbolically washing away their sins in preparation for a new more God-orientated life.

Isaiah in our most beautiful first reading looks forward to a time of peace and integrity. If we were to ask most people today, they would say that they seek peace, peace in the world and peace in the whole of creation. Isaiah tells of the coming time of the true judge, a person of perfect integrity, who, filled with the spirit of wisdom, inaugurates a time of peace in a transformed creation.

As Christians we read Isaiah in Advent because this vision is not simply an idle dream. This vision is being realised. The era of the just judge, the one on whom the spirit of the Lord rests, starts with these crowds of ordinary people drawn to the extraordinary grace of God's word. Jesus, the true Messiah, has begun his reign.

What about us? Are we like some of those Pharisees, trying to limit God's mercy and despising those who don't manage to live a virtuous Christian life in difficult circumstance? Are we like some of the Sadducees rejecting those who do not engage in some traditional religious paraphernalia or ceremonial? No, we are called upon to be open to God's mercy, a mercy broader than we can imagine. God's mercy is open to the many, the crowds who seek, even if they are not always initially sure who or what they seek.

John calls us in today's gospel to look to the Saviour and to trust in God's mercy. This means being humble, open to God's Word like St. John the Baptist. It means loving our neighbor, and working to create, with the help of God's grace, the new creation of love, integrity and peace. It means valuing the marginalized, rejecting false ideologies, and seeking the Truth. (*Peter Harries OP*)