

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

LECTIONARY #21

READING I Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the LORD:

Here is my **servant** whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,
upon whom I have **put** my spirit;
he shall **bring** forth justice to the nations,
not crying out, not shouting,
not making his voice heard in the street.
A **bruised** reed he shall **not break**,
and a smoldering **wick** he shall **not quench**,
until he **establishes** justice on the **earth**;
the **coastlands** will wait for his teaching.

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the **hand**;
I formed you, and **set** you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations,
to open the eyes of the blind,
to **bring** out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who **live** in darkness.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

Proclaim in an authoritative voice.

Pause and do not rush your words.

Use facial expression. Smile!

Emphasize the words in bold.

This reading is an important reminder of how we are to live. It is a call to action. Proclaim slowly and firmly. Pause after commas. Inspire the congregation with your energy.

READING I

In four beautiful poems, the prophet Isaiah describes a mysterious servant whom God chooses and sustains. The identity of the servant at times seems to be an individual, perhaps Isaiah himself, or the Messiah to come; at other times it appears to refer to the people as a whole. Whoever the servant may be, he will be the instrument of bringing God's justice to the earth.

Today's reading is the first of these servant songs. Well pleased with the servant, God has put the divine spirit upon him, thereby endowing him with the

power to accomplish the designated mission. In the first part of the poem, God presents the servant to an audience that may include both the exiles and the oppressor nations. Though the nations had treated God's people with harsh injustice, the servant will bring about justice in a gentle way. He will act patiently, neither breaking those who are bruised, nor quenching the faint light of those barely surviving. Even the distant coastlands will await the servant's life-giving teaching.

Having described the servant to exiles and nations, God addresses the servant

directly. The divine actions of calling, grasping by the hand, and forming the servant are deliberate, intimate, and done for a specific purpose. The servant is to be a living sign of God's covenant to Israel and at the same time be a light to the nations. The justice and light that the servant will bring will be directed particularly to the blind, imprisoned, and those in darkness. The servant's actions will thus be like God's own in caring for those most in need.

READING II

The story of Peter and the Roman centurion Cornelius

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 29:1–2, 3–4, 3, 9–10 (11b)

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Give to the LORD, you sons of God,
give to the LORD glory and praise,
Give to the LORD the glory due his name;
adore the LORD in holy attire.

The God of glory thunders,
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"
The LORD is enthroned above the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as king forever.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters,
the LORD, over vast waters.
The voice of the LORD is mighty;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.

READING II Acts of the Apostles 10:34–38

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Peter proceeded to **speak** to those gathered
in the house of Cornelius, saying:

"In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.

Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts **uprightly**
is acceptable to him.

You **know** the word that he sent to the **Israelites**

as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all,
what has happened **all** over Judea,
beginning in **Galilee** after the baptism
that **John** preached,
how God **anointed** Jesus of Nazareth
with the Holy Spirit and power.

He went about **doing** good
and healing all those **oppressed** by the **devil**,
for God was **with him**."

Cornelius = kohr-NEEL-yuhs

Use an informative tone.

Take your time. When commas are omitted at
the end of a line, continue reading. The
reading won't be as choppy and will be easier
to understand.

Judea = joo-DEE-uh

Galilee = GAL-ih-lee

Say this last line slowly and with a smile.

is a multi-scene drama that begins with Cornelius' vision in Caesarea, followed by Peter's vision in Joppa. Today's reading is from the next scene in which Peter, having gone to Caesarea, enters Cornelius' house. That Peter, a faithful Jew, would enter the house of the Gentile Cornelius is surprising and unlawful for him. Thus Peter explains the new insight that arose from his vision: "God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean."

In the Gentile house, after a brief dialogue with Cornelius, Peter addresses all those gathered there. In telling them "I see

that God shows no partiality," Peter is relating his own changed understanding and behavior. He realizes that these Gentiles whom Peter had formerly regarded as unclean are included among those acceptable to God.

Peter's new comprehension is actually rooted in Jewish history. God had initially sent word to the Israelites, Peter's own ancestors, from whom came Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. Lord of all! That is at the heart of Peter's new insight. He explains that after John's preaching of baptism, Jesus himself was baptized, anointed with

the Holy Spirit and power. Peter's reference to Baptism is the springboard for what will happen next in the drama. The two visions, Peter's journey to Caesarea, and the encounter in Cornelius' house where Peter gives his discourse each prepare the way for the Baptism of Cornelius' Gentile household, for Jesus is Lord of all.

GOSPEL

The first scene in which the adult Jesus appears in Matthew's Gospel is at the Jordan River. Crowds from Jerusalem were coming there to John for baptism. After chastising and