

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

What a beautiful reading from Isaiah! Take your time and build with excitement.

Jesse = JES-ee

Proclaim in a gentle tone and build energy.

Say firmly.

Keep up the energy.

Gently proclaim "Then the wolf shall be a guest" until you finish with "and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair" (next page).

LECTIONARY #4

READING I Isaiah 11:1-10

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him:

a spirit of **wisdom and of understanding,**

a spirit of counsel and of strength,

a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD,

and his delight shall be the **fear** of the LORD.

Not by appearance shall he **judge,**

nor by **hearsay** shall he decide,

but he shall **judge the poor with justice,**

and **decide aright** for the land's **afflicted.**

He shall **strike the ruthless** with the rod of his mouth,

and with the **breath** of his lips he shall **slay** the wicked.

Justice shall be the band around his waist,

and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

Then the wolf shall be a **guest** of the lamb,

and the leopard shall **lie down** with the kid;

the calf and the **young** lion shall browse together,

with a **little** child to guide them.

READING I

Isaiah's vision of a world transformed "on that day," was written when the kingly descendants of David were weak, unjust, and lacking in knowledge. The eighth-century BC Davidic kings were a mere "stump" of the tree that grew from the root of Jesse, the father of King David. Today's reading opens and closes with a promise that new life will arise from that stump, blossoming anew from the roots, and will be a signal for the nations.

Isaiah begins his description of the future Davidic descendant by announcing that the spirit of the Lord will rest upon

him; he emphasizes the spirit-bestowed gifts by repeating the word *spirit* three more times. The spirit is God's own life-giving breath that will be the source of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. These gifts are essential for the king to rule wisely, as did his ancestor David.

Filled with the spirit at the core of his being, the king will not only imitate David, but he will also act as the Lord does in governing the earth. Unlike earthly kings, who are concerned with appearances and make decisions based on hearsay, the spirit-filled

king will make judgments based on justice: right relationships in every dimension. The king will rule like the Lord God of Israel, who showed justice particularly to the poor and afflicted. Justice will be so important that the king will be clothed in it, with a band of justice around his waist.

The effects of such spirit-endowed governance will extend beyond the people of his kingdom. Nature itself will be transformed. Animals that ordinarily relate as predator and prey will live in harmony. Their new relationship will be more than avoiding conflict, but will involve intimacy.

Proclaim in a tone of expectation. Smile.

Gentiles = JEN-tîls

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND

Read the Scripture passage and its commentary in *Workbook*. Then read it from your Bible, including what comes before and after it, so that you understand the context.

The cow and the bear shall be **neighbors**,
together their young shall rest;
the lion shall **eat hay** like the **ox**.
The **baby** shall **play** by the **cobra's** den,
and the child lay his hand on the **adder's** lair.
There shall be **no harm** or **ruin** on all **my holy mountain**,
for the earth shall be filled with **knowledge** of the **LORD**,
as **water** covers the **sea**.
On that day, the root of **Jesse**,
set up as a **signal** for the nations,
the **Gentiles** shall **seek out**,
for his **dwelling** shall be glorious.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 (7)

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever.

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
he shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be
no more.

May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of
the earth.

For he shall rescue the poor when he
cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one
to help him.

He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

May his name be blessed forever;
as long as the sun his name shall remain.

In him shall all the tribes of the earth
be blessed;
all the nations shall proclaim
his happiness.

Being a guest, lying down and browsing together, and being neighbor create a hopeful scenario for the future. The peace of the animal kingdom reaches also to humanity, for the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Like the new harmony in the animal kingdom, there will be harmony between the house of David and the Gentiles in the glorious dwelling "on that day."

READING II Two themes tie the first and second readings together: hope and harmony. The hopeful vision in

Isaiah's peaceable kingdom had not yet been brought to fulfillment when Paul wrote his letters. Jews and Gentiles could not even eat together, and there was dissent among the many factions within Judaism. In the Christian community in Rome, there appeared to be rivalry between Gentile and Jewish believers, and those who considered themselves strong looked down on those they regarded as weak. Isaiah's vision of harmony remained a distant hope.

Paul uses several methods to promote the hoped-for unity and understanding in

the community: instruction, prayer, and exhortation. He begins by reminding his audience of the teaching they have received from the Scriptures. Believers who live in a state of endurance in the face of trials receive encouragement and hope from the Word of God. Although the tradition is ancient, it is relevant to their contemporary situation.

Paul inserts a brief prayer between instruction and exhortation. Echoing his description of the believers in Rome, Paul asks that the God of endurance and encouragement will inspire them, both in

Pause after "Brothers and sisters."
Use a tone of authority.

Proclaim as if you are praying.

Read with energy.

circumcised = SER-kuhm-sī'z*d

patriarchs = PAY-tree-ahrks

Gentiles = JEN-tīls

Proclaim with gratefulness in your voice.

Pause.

Proclaim with enthusiasm.

Proclaim with vocal variety and facial
expression.

Judea = joo-DEE-uh

Isaiah = ī-ZAY-uh

their thinking and their acting, to live in harmony with one another, with one accord and one voice. Exhibiting such internal unity is in keeping with Christ Jesus, who is the exemplar of the unity for which Paul prays. Harmony in the community is a way of glorifying God.

Paul's exhortation to "welcome one another" implies more than abiding by the cultural norms of hospitality. He gives his audience a clear pattern of how they are to welcome one another: as Christ has welcomed them. Christ's ministry to the circumcised, the Jewish people, showed

READING II Romans 15:4–9

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

Whatever was written **previously** was written for our instruction, that by **endurance** and by the **encouragement** of the Scriptures we might have hope.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in **keeping** with Christ Jesus, that with **one accord** you may with one **voice** glorify the **God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then, as Christ **welcomed** you, for the glory of God.

For I say that Christ became a **minister** of the **circumcised** to show God's **truthfulness**, to confirm the promises of the patriarchs, but so that the Gentiles might **glorify** God for his mercy.

As it is written:

*Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles
and sing praises to your name.*

GOSPEL Matthew 3:1–12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of **heaven** is at **hand!**" It was of him that the prophet **Isaiah** had spoken when he said:
*A voice of one crying out in the desert,
Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.*

God's truthfulness and fidelity to the promises made to their ancestors. His welcome of them was a manifestation of God's endurance and encouragement. In addition, Christ's ministry to the Jews was not for them alone. It was also for the Gentiles who, seeing God's mercy manifest to the Jews, would also praise God's mercy. God's plan, and Paul's hope, is that Jews and Gentiles, living in harmony, would sing praise to God's name.

GOSPEL

The first two chapters of the Gospel according to

Matthew tell of the announcement of Jesus' birth, the birth itself, and events surrounding it. After these two chapters, Matthew jumps forward to the adult Jesus, his ministry, passion, death, and Resurrection.

Before saying anything about the adult Jesus, though, Matthew gives an account of John the Baptist, the precursor who prepared "the way of the Lord." John appears as a prophet in the Jewish tradition, like Elijah and Isaiah, calling the people to repentance. His strange clothing, desert diet, and demanding message, rather than keeping the city inhabitants away, attract