

Second Sunday of Advent

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

God announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (his name means "my messenger") will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined.

¹See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Psalm: Luke 1:68-79

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us. (Lk. 1:78)

⁶⁸Blessed are you, Lord, the ^l God of Israel,
you have come to your people and ^l set them free.

⁶⁹**You have raised up for us a ^l mighty Savior,
born of the house of your ^l servant David. R**

⁷⁰Through your holy prophets, you promised of old to save us ^l from our enemies,
⁷¹from the hands of ^l all who hate us,

⁷²**to show mercy ^l to our forebears,
and to remember your ^l holy covenant.**

⁷³This was the oath you swore to our ^l father Abraham:
⁷⁴to set us free from the hands of our ^l enemies,

**free to worship you ^l without fear,
⁷⁵holy and righteous before you, all the days ^l of our life. R**

⁷⁶And you, child, shall be called the prophet of ^l the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to pre- ^l pare the way,

⁷⁷**to give God's people knowledge ^l of salvation
by the forgiveness ^l of their sins.**

⁷⁸In the tender compassion ^l of our God
the dawn from on high shall ^l break upon us,

**⁷⁹to shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace. R**

Second Reading: Philippians 1:3-11

The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul, sometimes a stern preacher, is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.

³I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I 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. ⁷It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

John the Baptist is a herald of Jesus, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.

¹In 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, ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴as 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.

⁵Every 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;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'