

Readings + Third Sunday of Advent, year B + December 17, 2023

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; 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 Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

- ¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
the LORD has sent me to bring good news to the
oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display the glory
of the LORD.
⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
⁸For I, the LORD, love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant
with them.
⁹Their descendants shall be known among the
nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has
blessed.
¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;

for the LORD has clothed me with the garments
of salvation,
and has covered me with the robe of
righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to
spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and
praise
to spring up before all the nations.

Psalmody Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.
**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and
our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they
said among the nations, "The LORD has
done great things for them."**
The LORD has done great things for us, and we
are glad indeed.
**Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the
watercourses of the Negeb.**
Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs
of joy.
**Those who go out weeping, carrying the
seed, will come again with joy, shouldering
their sheaves.**

Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul writes: ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without
ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for
this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise
prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast to
what is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.
²³ May that very God of peace sanctify you
entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be
kept sound and blameless at the coming of our
Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is
faithful, and will do this.

Holy Gospel John 1:6-8, 19-28

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸John himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the authorities sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you?"

Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³John said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.