

### great news

#### Prayer Centre

This week, using a rose coloured cloth as a foundation, place the Advent wreath with three purple candles and one rose candle on it and the Scriptures open to the readings. Light the first two purple candles. To highlight the joy and beauty of the Sunday, place some flowers in a vase around or near the Scriptures. Read the reflection below as the rose candle is lit.

Rejoice in the Lord always, it is he who has come to be with us, rejoice.  
We increase happiness not by living with what is perfect in ourselves and others but by looking past the imperfection to find love.

#### First Reading

Isaiah 61 :1-2, 10-11

The Sovereign Lord has filled me with his Spirit. He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison. He has sent me to proclaim that the time has come when the Lord will save his people and defeat their enemies. He has sent me to comfort all who mourn. Jerusalem rejoices because of what the Lord has done. She is like a bride dressed for her wedding. God has clothed her with salvation and victory. As surely as seeds sprout and grow, the Sovereign Lord will save his people, and all the nations will praise him.

#### Did You Know?

The people of Israel will be restored to their land after the exile in Babylon and an unknown prophet, strengthened and empowered by the "Spirit of the Lord", and set apart by anointing is to bring the Good News to them.

Those distressed, those whose spirit has been crushed by the exile, will be given strength and encouragement.

The "year of favour" will be a time when all that God asks is fulfilled, a time of release from the bondage of sin and strife.

In verses 10-11 the prophet speaks for the people of Israel when he praises God who has given believers salvation and looks to a time when righteousness will grow and integrity for all will "spring up".

#### Reflection

*How can I comfort those who mourn so that they will rejoice in the Good News of Christ?*

#### Canticle

Luke 1: 46-50. 53-54

Response: **My soul rejoices in my God.**

My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her nothingness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed. **R.**

The Almighty works marvels for me.  
Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him. **R.**

He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.  
He protects Israel, his servant,  
remembering his mercy. **R.**

#### Did You Know?

The canticle is taken from Luke. The verses are from Mary's song of joy when she visited her cousin Elizabeth and our response comes from Isaiah.  
**"My soul rejoices in my God."**

#### Reflection

*Like Mary I must give thanks to the Lord for the marvels that He has done for me.*

#### Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus. Do not restrain the Holy Spirit; do not despise inspired messages.

Put all things to the test: keep what is good and avoid every kind of evil. May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being - spirit, soul, and body - free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you will do it, because he is faithful.

### Did You Know?

About the year 51 AD, Saint Paul wrote his first letter to the converts in Thessalonica, a port city in Macedonia. He had stopped over during his second missionary journey at Jason's house where he was able to convert quite a few Jews, but jealousy arose in the community and he had to leave in a hurry. The letter directed to the new converts is brief but full of good advice. Verses 16 - 24 enumerate how we should be continually striving to be what Christ asked of us. A truly religious life should be one of continual praise of God. We should look to those things we are thankful for each and every day. If we believe that everything is created by God and comes from God, then he is truly worthy of our praise.

### Reflection

*For what good things can I thank God today?*

### Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;  
he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.

Alleluia!

### Gospel

John 1:6-8, 19-28

God sent his messenger, a man named John, who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem sent some priests and Levites to John to ask him, "Who are you?" John did not refuse to answer, but spoke out openly and clearly, saying: "I am not the Messiah." "Who are you, then?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?" "No, I am not," John answered. "Are you the Prophet?" They asked. "No," he replied. "Then tell us who you are," they said.

"We have to take an answer back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John answered by quoting the prophet Isaiah: "I am 'the voice of someone shouting in the desert:

Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!' " The

messengers, who had been sent by the Pharisees, then asked John, "If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?" John answered, "I baptize with water, but among you stands the one you do not know. He is coming after me, but I am not good enough even to untie his sandals." All this happened in Bethany on the east side of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

### Did You Know?

The Gospel of John is different from the other Gospels in so much as John the Baptist is not identified as the "Baptiser". Only in verses 30-34 is there a mention of John (the Baptist) baptising Jesus and why this is happening... "to make him known to the people of Israel". It becomes clear at the beginning of this reading, that the writer, by using the word witness 4 times in the first few chapters, is saying that John has been chosen to be a primary witness to Jesus. John the Baptist is the first person in this gospel to use the concept that Jesus is the Son of God.

### Reflection

*How can I be faithful messenger of Christ in society that is not open to His Word?*



### Action for the Week

Revisit Baptism/Confirmation. Review a copy of the Baptismal Promises (Easter Vigil) in the Roman Missal and reflect on what is being said.