

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O people of Sion, behold,
the Lord will come to save the nations,
and the Lord will make the glory of his voice
heard
in the joy of your heart.

COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-5:9-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
'Console my people, console them,'
says your God.
'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem
and call to her
that her time of service is ended,
that her sin is atoned for,
that she has received from the hand of the Lord
double punishment for her crimes.'
A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness
a way for the Lord.
Make a straight highway for our God
across the desert.
Let every valley be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
let every cliff become a plain,
and the ridges a valley;
then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed
and all mankind shall see it;
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'
Go up on a high mountain,
joyful messenger to Zion.
Shout with a loud voice,
joyful messenger to Jerusalem.
Shout without fear,
say to the towns of Judah,
'Here is your God.'
Here is the Lord coming with power,
his arm subduing all things to him.
The prize of his victory is with him,
his trophies all go before him.
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering lambs in his arms,
holding them against his breast
and leading to their rest the mother ewes.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 84

Response:

**Let us see, O Lord, your mercy
and give us your saving help.**

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for his people.
His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land. **(R.)**
2. Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven. **(R.)**

3. The Lord will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before him
and peace shall follow his steps. **(R.)**

SECOND READING

2 Peter 3:8-14

A reading from the second letter of St Peter.
There is one thing, my friends, that you must
never forget: that with the Lord, 'a day' can
mean a thousand years, and a thousand
years is like a day. The Lord is not being slow
to carry out his promises, as anybody else
might be called slow, but he is being patient
with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and
everybody to be brought to change his ways.
The Day of the Lord will come like a thief,
and then with a roar the sky will vanish, the
elements will catch fire and fall apart, the
earth and all that it contains will be burnt up.
Since everything is coming to an end like
this, you should be living holy and saintly
lives while you wait and long for the Day of
God to come, when the sky will dissolve in
flames and the elements melt in the heat.
What we are waiting for is what he promised;
the new heavens and new earth, the place
where righteousness will be at home. So
then, my friends, while you are waiting, do
your best to live lives without spot or stain so
that he will find you at peace.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,
and all humankind shall see
the salvation of God.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.
The beginning of the Good News about Jesus
Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the
book of the prophet Isaiah:
Look, I am going to send my messenger
before you;
he will prepare your way.
A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,
and so it was that John the Baptist appeared
in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of
repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All
Judea and all the people of Jerusalem made
their way to him, and as they were baptised
by him in the river Jordan they confessed
their sins. John wore a garment of camel-
skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey.
In the course of his preaching he said,
'Someone is following me, someone who
is more powerful than I am, and I am not
fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his
sandals. I have baptised you with water, but
he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next three lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

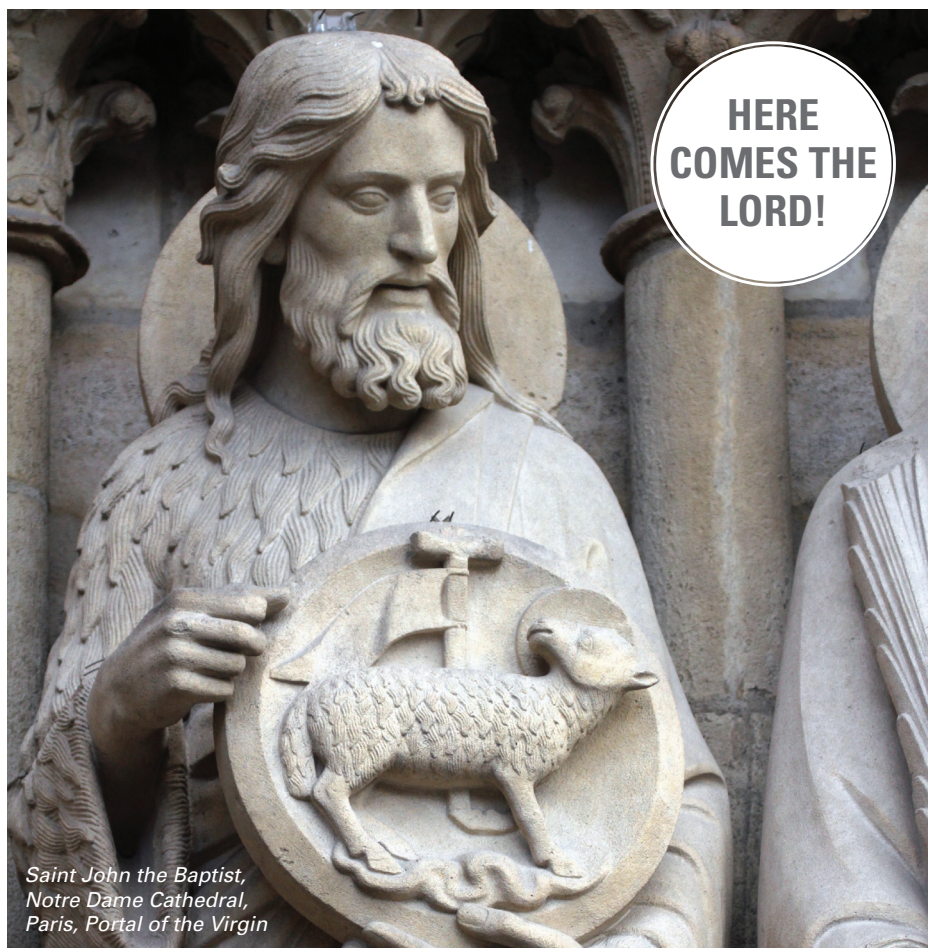
Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers
and offerings,
and, since we have no merits to plead our
cause,
come, we pray, to our rescue
with the protection of your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights,
and behold the joy which comes to you from
God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Replenished by the food of spiritual
nourishment,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, through our partaking in this mystery,
you may teach us to judge wisely the things
of earth
and hold firm to the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Saint John the Baptist,
Notre Dame Cathedral,
Paris, Portal of the Virgin

HERE
COMES THE
LORD!

Mark's gospel opens very abruptly with the figure of John the Baptist offering a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The Baptist's preaching is effective, judging by the crowds who respond positively to his message and show that they have accepted his message inwardly by being baptized. In this account, there is no threat of punishment, but rather the simple appeal to people to think again, to change their mind and attitude. It is the message of the prophets of Israel down through the ages to the people: that they should return to their previous relationship with the Lord during the period in the wilderness, a time of particular closeness and intimacy. Mark describes John in terms of Elijah, the figure who represents the prophets in biblical writing. By doing so, and by quoting from Isaiah, another of the great members of the prophetic tradition, Mark is firmly anchoring the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God in the plan of God for all human beings. However, the success of God's plan depends to a great extent on human beings co-operating and playing their part, hence the call to prepare a way for the Lord. ■

LEARN

John the Baptist was a person of great influence: It was probably because his preaching was taken seriously by soldiers and members of the civil service of the day that he was imprisoned and executed by Herod Antipas.

To *baptize* means to *dip*, to *immerse*. Metaphorically, it can mean to *drench*, for example, with fire or suffering.

To *sin*, in the bible, usually means to *fall short* of the ideal, to *miss the mark*.

To *repent*, in the Gospel, means the same as the expression to *return to the Lord your God* in the Hebrew scriptures.

REFLECT

Mark presents the story of Jesus against the background of a journey from Galilee to Jerusalem: in that sense, such is one of the meanings of the way of the Lord. Another theme involving the idea of journey which runs through the First Gospel is that of discipleship. At different places along the road, the disciples are faced with questions or statements about Jesus which usually they misunderstand. This is not so much to do with their inability to grasp who Jesus truly is as with Mark's withholding the accurate description of Jesus as God's Son until the time when it can be truly proclaimed – at the Cross, when there is no possibility of any further misunderstanding. We know from the outset that Jesus is the Son of God, since Mark tells us so in the opening line of his story, but it is clearly not obvious to the other characters in the narrative. Often we come across a question such as Who is this ... ? and the question is addressed to us, the readers or listeners.

At this time of Advent, we are invited to examine our relationship with Jesus: but to do this we have first of all to think about what we believe about him, who he is and what he means to us. Discipleship, according to Mark, is a journey, it is a growing in understanding. As in any relationship, we can be brought up short when we discover that there is more to the other person than we imagined at first, and that the relationship has to change, it must grow or die. This season of Advent can be a time of growth – if we want it to be, and if we take the message of John the Baptist to heart. ■

DO

Think about the message of John the Baptist then renew your baptismal commitment to the Lord.



SAY

Prepare a way for the Lord!