

# The Living Word

Third Sunday of Advent, Year C

12 December 2021

## First Reading Zep 3:14-18

*With gladness the Lord will rejoice over you.*

Shout for joy, daughter of Zion,  
Israel, shout aloud!  
Rejoice, exult with all your heart,  
daughter of Jerusalem!  
The Lord has repealed your sentence;  
he has driven your enemies away.  
The Lord, the king of Israel, is in your  
midst;  
you have no more evil to fear.  
When that day comes, word will come to  
Jerusalem:  
Zion, have no fear,  
do not let your hands fall limp.  
The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a victorious warrior.  
He will exult with joy over you,  
he will renew you by his love;  
he will dance with shouts of joy for you  
as on a day of festival.

## Responsorial Psalm

Is 12:2-6 R. v.6

*(R.) Cry out with joy and gladness:  
for among you is the great and  
Holy One of Israel.*

1. Truly, God is my salvation,  
I trust, I shall not fear.  
For the Lord is my strength, my song,  
he became my saviour.  
With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of salvation. (R.)
2. Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to  
his name!  
Make his mighty deeds known to the  
peoples!  
Declare the greatness of his name. (R.)
3. Sing a psalm to the Lord  
for he has done glorious deeds,  
make them known to all the earth!  
People of Zion, sing and shout for joy  
for great in your midst is the Holy One  
of Israel. (R.)

## Second Reading Phil 4:4-7

*The Lord is near.*

I want you to be happy, always happy in  
the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your  
happiness. Let your tolerance be evident

to everyone: the Lord is very near. There is  
no need to worry; but if there is anything  
you need, pray for it, asking God for it with  
prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of  
God, which is so much greater than we can  
understand, will guard your hearts and your  
thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

## Gospel Acclamation Is 61:1 (Lk 4:18)

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

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

*Alleluia!*

## Gospel Lk 3:10-18

*What, then, must we do?*

When all the people asked John, 'What  
must we do?' he answered, 'If anyone has  
two tunics he must share with the man  
who has none, and the one with something  
to eat must do the same.' There were tax  
collectors too who came for baptism, and  
these said to him, 'Master, what must we  
do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than  
your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in  
their turn, 'What about us? What must we  
do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No  
extortion! Be content with your pay!'

A feeling of expectancy had grown among  
the people, who were beginning to think  
that John might be the Christ, so John  
declared before them all, 'I baptise you with  
water, but someone is coming, someone  
who is more powerful than I am, and I am  
not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he  
will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.  
His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his  
threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into  
his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire  
that will never go out.' As well as this, there  
were many other things he said to exhort  
the people and to announce the Good News  
to them.



## Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

Some people have an image of God  
who must be obeyed out of fear.  
Rules of behaviour are kept as part  
of a deal to avoid punishment. But St  
Paul was imitating God when he told  
the Philippians that all he wanted  
was their 'happiness'. God's deepest  
desire is that we share divine bliss.  
St Thomas Aquinas tells us that the  
goal of human life is this beatific  
happiness.

Of course, there is a way of life which  
responds to the Divine Lover. John  
the Baptist insists on rules of social  
justice, particularly those which  
forbid taking advantage of the  
vulnerable. But these are the  
minimum. He envisages a response  
of extravagant generosity. It will take  
Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Fire to  
make this possible.

This was effected by the One foretold  
by John. He doesn't name him, but  
we know it was Jesus of Nazareth  
who had the power to unleash such  
over-the-top generosity. Jesus sent  
his Holy Spirit at Pentecost as if in  
wind and fire. This created a new  
community which, the Acts of  
Apostles tells us, responded with  
acts of unrestrained generosity to  
the vulnerable and needy.

We might pause for a moment to  
pray for a generous spirit responding  
in gratitude to the Divine Lover who,  
as Risen Lord, has the power and  
will to enable us to be filled with  
Divine Bliss.

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