

# **CELEBRATE SABBATH**

## **Second Sunday of Advent**

**As you open yourself to living beyond your comfort zone by taking risks,  
embracing challenges, and striving for excellence,  
your purpose will emerge.**

### **Isaiah 11:1-10**

Isaiah describes the power and the virtue of the promised king in whom the promise of God would be fulfilled. The spirit of the Lord will bless and empower this chosen king to be a man of virtue beyond all ordinary human understanding. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him and empower him with gifts.

The Church's tradition lists seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord, as described in this excerpt from Isaiah (Is. 11:1-2). Isaiah saw them as God's gifts to the king for the service of his people. We see them today as gifts for the common good - for the benefit of the community, and not for personal gain/profit.

The list of gifts, as seen above, does not imply that there are no other gifts from the Spirit of God. There are as many gifts as there are people. The list could be seen and understood as inclusive of all gifts that God gives to each of us. It is up to each of us to open ourselves, discern and discover our own gifts with which we are gifted. We are gifted persons, a gifted community and a gifted Church.

**We are gifted with the Holy Spirit and spirited with His gifts. BE GRATEFUL. The Holy Spirit calls us to develop these gifts, share them with others and use them for the service of the community.**

### **Psalms 72**

This Psalm is a royal psalm in which the Israelite king, as the representative of God, is seen as the instrument of divine justice and blessing for the whole world. The king is human, giving only what he has received from God. Hence intercession must be made for the king. It is a prayer that God's justice will rule from sea to sea, to the ends of the earth and to the boundaries of the civilized world known at the time.

**O God, with your judgment endow the king,  
And with your justice, the king's son;  
He shall govern your people with justice  
And you afflicted ones with judgment.**

## **Romans 15:4-9**

Paul had appealed to the community in Rome to learn to live not for themselves but for others, to look out for the good of the community (Rom.15:1-3). In this excerpt, he instructs them to maintain harmony in the community, to create a sense of fellowship, to resolve conflicts and tensions amicably and live a life of unity in Christ. He invited and encouraged them to extend this fellowship to all people, not only the Jewish converts, but also to the Gentiles because God loves all people.

**Because God's mercy is offered to all, the Christian community must reach out to all in compassion and love.**

## **Mathew 3:1-12**

Mathew describes John the Baptist as heralding the coming of Jesus and calling people to "repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" – at hand meant, here and now...it is happening now and so there is an urgency to repent and prepare now. John shared his vision of what this preparation had to be. He described that vision in beautiful poetic language, "Prepare the way of the Lord...make straight his paths.....produce good fruit as evidence of repentance...."

His vision was not about a geographic transformation of landscape, but a transformation of a people who will experience salvation in Jesus. He called his people to level what needed to be leveled, make straight what was crooked and make smooth what was rough in their lives. Today, we are challenged to change what need to be changed and bring about a transformation of our life in Christ.

**Prepare the way of the Lord...make straight his paths... level what needs to be leveled, make straight what is crooked and make smooth what is rough in your life. May you experience a transformation of your life during this season of advent.**

John lived a simple life and claimed nothing for himself, neither did he draw people to himself. He made it clear to them that he was not even worthy to untie the sandal straps of the Messiah. He saw his mission as preparing the way of the Messiah. He called people to conversion and to wait for the good news. He announced the coming of someone who will baptize with water and the Holy Spirit.

**John the Baptist inspires us to be humble and be at the service of others in serving God. He calls us to give God first place, to seek God's honor. He calls us to point to Christ, to draw people to Christ rather than to our own self.**

## **Saint of the day, December 7 - St. Ambrose and 290 saints are remembered this day.**

Ambrose was born around 340 A.D. in a Roman Christian family. After Ambrose's father passed away, he was educated in Rome, where he studied law, literature and rhetoric. Ambrose received a place on the council, like his father, and was made consular prefect, or the Governor, of Liguria and Emilia around the year 372. Ambrose's headquarters were in Milan, the then second capital of Italy. He remained Governor until 374 when he became the Bishop of Milan. After the former Bishop of Milan died, Ambrose attended the election to prevent any uproars between the Nicene Church and the Arians. While giving an address, the assembly began calling for him to become the next bishop.

Ambrose was known for his Nicene beliefs, but Arians also favored him because he had previously shown charity in theological matters. However, being neither baptized or trained in theology, Ambrose refused to become the next bishop. He ran and attempted to hide, but his colleague gave him up. Within a week's time, Ambrose was baptized, ordained and duly consecrated bishop of Milan on December 7, 374. As bishop, he donated all of his land and gave his money to the poor. This made him widely popular and often times more politically powerful than even the emperor. Ambrose died on April 4, 397.

Ambrose's knowledge and abilities impressed Augustine of Hippo, who previously thought poorly of Christian preachers. After meeting Ambrose, Augustine reevaluated himself and was forever changed. In 387, Ambrose baptized Augustine. St. Monica, Augustine's mother, loved Ambrose "as an angel of God who uprooted her son from his former ways and led him to his convictions of Christ."

Ambrose was a great defender of the Church against Arianism in Milan. He often attempted to theologically dispute their propositions. Ambrose was generous to the poor. To him, giving to the poor was just a repayment of God's resources, which were intended for everyone equally. He introduced reforms in the order and manner of public worship. He was known for his "liturgical flexibility that kept in mind that liturgy was a tool to serve people in worshipping God, and ought not to become a rigid entity that is invariable from place to place."

Ambrose authored many of the Church's important writings and hymns. He is credited with composing the repertory Ambrosian chant, also known as the Antiphonal Chant. He is also credited with composing the hymn "Te Deum," which is believed to have been written when he baptized Augustine of Hippo. He is one of the four original doctors of the Church.

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