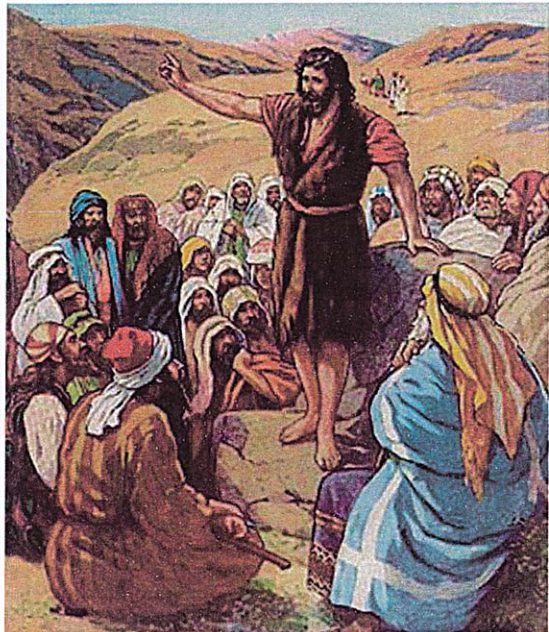


Our Faith on Sunday

GOSPEL REFLECTION



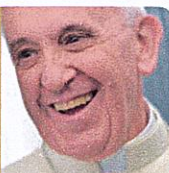
In this Sunday's gospel reading we hear John the Baptist preaching repentance because "the kingdom of heaven is at

hand". By now we are used to "celebrities" being forced to repent for something they posted on social media and which has caused offence to some group or other. Perhaps it is not surprising if we doubt the authenticity of their being sorry. Often, it's a matter of damage limitation and the fear of being "cancelled". This is not the sort of repentance John the Baptist is talking about. It is not the repentance that Jesus is talking about when he says, "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1,15). When we are face to face with Jesus we cannot fake repentance, for he can read the innermost thoughts of our soul. But there is more. Jesus links repentance with belief in the "good

news". Simply to wallow in regret and remorse for my past actions can easily turn into a negative concentration on myself, a case of the serpent eating its tail. The essence of the gospel message is that a new life is being offered to me. Writing to the Corinthians Paul affirms: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2Cor 5,17). This is the reason we will hear these words sung many times over the Christmas season: "Joy to the world, the Lord is come".



POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL
FRATELLI TUTTI
BROTHERS AND SISTERS ALL



Pope Francis'
Encyclical Letter
DILEXIT NOS

THE INJUSTICE OF WAR

261. Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims. Let us look once more at all those civilians whose killing was considered "collateral damage". Let us ask the victims themselves. Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood. Let us hear the true stories of these victims of violence, look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naive for choosing peace.

Many a page of the Gospel illustrates how attentive Jesus was to individuals and above all to their problems and needs. We are told that, "when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless" (Mt 9:36). Whenever we feel that everyone ignores us, that no one cares what becomes of us, that we are of no importance to anyone, he remains concerned for us. To Nathanael, standing apart and busy about his own affairs, he could say, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you" (Jn 1:48).

Precisely out of concern for us, Jesus knows every one of our good intentions and small acts of charity. The Gospel tells us that once he "saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins" in the Temple treasury (Lk 21:2) and immediately brought it to the attention of his disciples. Jesus thus appreciates the good that he sees in us. When the centurion approached him with complete confidence, "Jesus listened to him and was amazed" (Mt 8:10). How reassuring it is to know that, even if others are not aware of our good intentions or actions, Jesus sees them and regards them highly.



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.**

Cf. Is 30:19,30

his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.**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,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:1-10

On that day: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples — of him shall the nations enquire, and his resting-place shall be glorious.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.**PSALM**

Psalm 72(71):1-2. 7-8. 12-13. 17. R. cf. 7

R. In his days shall justice flourish, and great peace for ever.

O God, give your judgement to the king,
to a king's son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice,
and your poor in right judgement

R.

In his days justice shall flourish,
and great peace till the moon is no more.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the River to the bounds of the earth.

R.

For he shall rescue the needy when they cry,
the poor who have no one to help.
He will have pity on the weak and the needy,
and save the lives of the needy.

R.

May his name endure for ever,
his name continue like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blest in him,
all nations shall call him blessed.

R.

SECOND READING

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Romans 15:4-9

Brothers and sisters: Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL**Alleluia, alleluia.**

Luke 3:4, 6

**Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight;
all flesh shall see the salvation of God.**

Alleluia.**GOSPEL**

Matthew 3:1-12

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight."'

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father", for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

'I baptise you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**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**

Bar 5:5;4:36

**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.