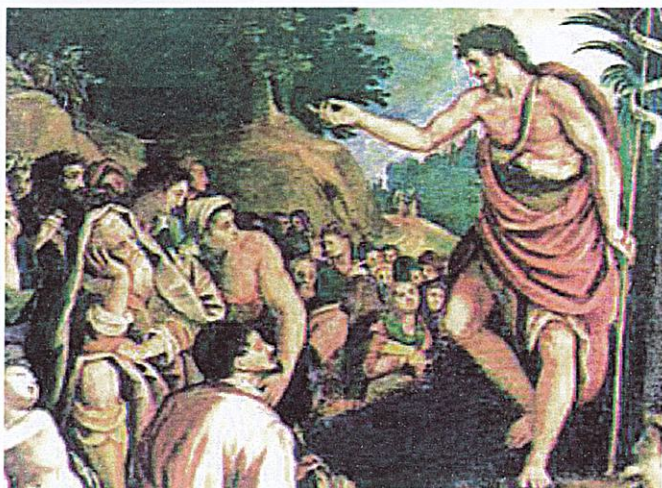


Our Faith on Sunday

GOSPEL REFLECTION



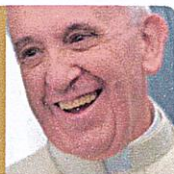
When John the Baptist wanted to know whether Jesus was the Messiah who had been promised, Jesus pointed to the blind who could now see, the lame who could walk, the lepers who were cleansed, the deaf who could hear, the dead who had been brought

back to life. Yes, Jesus promised eternal life, but he also responded to the suffering of those living in this world. The Christian message about salvation is not the “opium of the masses” claimed by Marx. It is not about putting up with suffering in this life for a promised reward in the next life. Taking Jesus as their model, Christians are called to respond to those who are suffering in this world. In fact, the very possibility of eternal happiness is linked to whether or not I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those who are sick or are in prison. Saint Vincent de

Paul said: “We cannot better assure our eternal happiness than by living and dying in the service of the poor”. What else could the commandment to love our neighbour mean if not feeling the hunger, thirsty, poverty of the other as if it were mine? Perhaps in the midst all the tinsel and lights it is time to re-focus on the real meaning of Christmas. Christ brings true joy into the world, the joy which blossoms in our hearts each time that we reach out to a neighbour in need.



POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL FRATELLI TUTTI BROTHERS AND SISTERS ALL



THE INJUSTICE OF WAR

262. Rules by themselves will not suffice if we continue to think that the solution to current problems is deterrence through fear or the threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Indeed, “if we take into consideration the principal threats to peace and security with their many dimensions in this multipolar world of the twenty-first century as, for example, terrorism, asymmetrical conflicts, cybersecurity, environmental problems, poverty, not a few doubts arise regarding the inadequacy of nuclear deterrence as an effective response to such challenges. These concerns are even greater when we consider the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would follow from any use of nuclear weapons, with devastating, indiscriminate and uncontrollable effects, over time and space... We need also to ask ourselves how sustainable is a stability based on fear, when it actually increases fear and undermines relationships of trust between peoples. International peace and stability cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation, or on simply maintaining a balance of power... In this context, the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons becomes both a challenge and a moral and humanitarian imperative... Growing interdependence and globalization mean that any response to the threat of nuclear weapons should be collective and concerted, based on mutual trust. This trust can be built only through dialogue that is truly directed to the common good and not to the protection of veiled or particular interests”,²⁴⁴ With the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, let us establish a global fund²⁴⁵ that can finally put an end to hunger and favour development in the most impoverished countries, so that their citizens will not resort to violent or illusory solutions, or have to leave their countries in order to seek a more dignified life.

244. Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons (23 March 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 394-396. 245. Cf. SAINT PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 282.

Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter DILEXIT NOS

Although the Scriptures preserve Jesus' words, ever alive and timely, there are moments when he speaks to us inwardly, calls us and leads us to a better place. That better place is his heart. There he invites us to find fresh strength and peace: “Come to me, all who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). In this sense, he could say to his disciples, “Abide in me” (Jn 15:4).

Jesus' words show that his holiness did not exclude deep emotions. On various occasions, he demonstrated a love that was both passionate and compassionate. He could be deeply moved and grieved, even to the point of shedding tears. It is clear that Jesus was not indifferent to the daily cares and concerns of people, such as their weariness or hunger: “I have compassion for this crowd... they have nothing to eat... they will faint on the way, and some of them have come from a great distance” (Mk 8:2-3)



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.
Indeed, the Lord is near.

Phil 4:4-5

another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

COLLECT

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,
enable us, we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
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 35:1-6a, 10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Sion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 146(145):6c-7. 8-9a. 9b-10. R. cf. Isaiah 35:4

R. Come, Lord, and save us.

or:

Alleluia.

It is the LORD who preserves fidelity for ever,
who does justice to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the LORD who sets prisoners free.

It is the LORD who opens the eyes of the blind,
the LORD who raises up those who are bowed down.
It is the LORD who loves the just,
the LORD who protects the stranger.

The LORD upholds the orphan and the widow,
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The LORD will reign for ever,
your God, O Sion, from age to age.

SECOND READING

A reading from the Letter of Saint James. James 5:7-10

Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Alleluia, alleluia.

Isaiah 61:1 (Luke 4:18)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;

he has sent me to proclaim good news to the poor.

Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 11:2-11

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At that time: When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'

And Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 'What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." 'Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

- R. May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray,
be offered to you unceasingly,
to complete what was begun in sacred mystery
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work.
Through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Is 35:4

- R. Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear.
Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord,
that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults
and prepare us for the coming feasts.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.