

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR A

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Give us strength,
build up our courage,
mighty God,
because we are sometimes
weak and afraid.
You sent Jesus
to make the sick better
and to be a friend of the poor.
May we believe in him
and be happy
that you always support us.
We pray to you
through Jesus, our Lord.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Today's readings speak of the signs that reveal God's presence among us.

The first reading is a prophecy addressed to the people of God in exile in Babylon. Israel has become a wasteland. The holy city, Jerusalem, is in ruins and is occupied by foreigners. The people feel empty, dry and deserted, but the prophet encourages them to keep hope. With bright images of a land which will rejoice and bloom, Isaiah urges the people to have courage and not to fear.

For most of the year, large parts of Palestine are barren of all vegetation. When Isaiah speaks of the desert blooming with many flowers, he is speaking of a real transformation of nature. Such a transformation would surely reveal the power and glory of God—just so, says Isaiah, when those who are blind can see; those who are deaf can hear; those who are lame can walk, and those who are captive return in joy. This too will reveal the power and glory of our God.

In the Gospel, John the Baptist sends messengers to ask if Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited one. Jesus responds with a litany of the signs which were prophesied throughout the Old Testament as the manifestation of God's saving presence. Jesus simply invites the seeker of the Messiah to look at the signs.

As we prepare for the coming of Christ, the Messiah, the liturgy recalls God's promise and its fulfillment in Jesus.

FIRST READING: *Isaiah 35:1-6, 10*

This is a reading from the prophet Isaiah.

This is what the prophet Isaiah said:

“Let the desert be glad,
and the dry lands be filled with flowers.
Let everyone rejoice, singing for joy.
For they will see the glory
and the wonder of our God.

“Say to those who are weak and frightened,

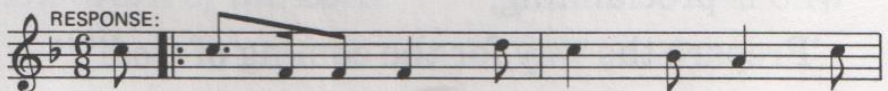
‘Be strong!
Have courage!
Do not be afraid.
Your God is coming with justice
to reward and save you.’

“Then those who are blind will be able to see;
those who are deaf will be able to hear;
those who are crippled will jump like deer,
and those who could not talk will sing.”

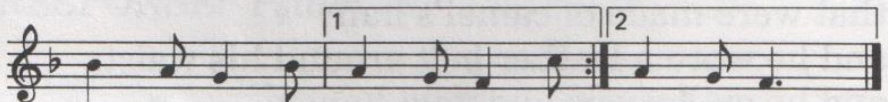
The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 72*

RESPONSE:



For all that you do we wor - ship you, we



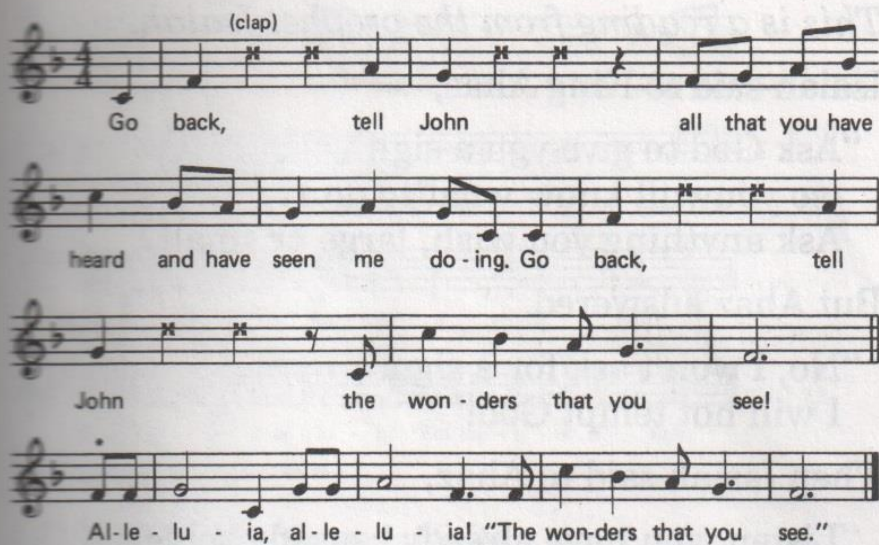
wor - ship you, we wor - ship you. For wor - ship you.

VERSES:



1. Glo - ry and praise to your name. _____ For
2. You come like rain to the earth. _____
3. You will bring jus - tice and peace. _____
4. You save the weak and the poor. _____
5. You give us bless - ings and joy. _____

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



(clap)

Go back, tell John all that you have
heard and have seen me do-ing. Go back, tell
John the won-ders that you see!
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia! "The won-ders that you see."

*After Gospel, repeat Acclamation from here.

GOSPEL: *Matthew 11:2-6*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

While John was in prison,
he heard about the things Christ was doing.
So he sent messengers to ask Jesus,

"Are you the one
we have been waiting for?"

Jesus said to them,

"Go back and tell John
what you see and hear.
People who were blind can see.
Those who were crippled can walk.
Those who had leprosy are cured.
Those who were deaf can hear.
People who were dead are raised to life,
and the Good News
is being preached to the poor.
Blessed is everyone who believes in me!"

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

What did you hear? Encourage the children to recall the images of *Isaiah* and the signs of Jesus.

In about two weeks it will be Christmas. We have been waiting for a long time. We are already preparing the manger and gifts. Our streets are decorated with lights. Stores are crowded with shoppers. But where is Jesus? How will we recognize him in all of the activities of Christmas, all the parties, the shopping, the lights, the music?

The people of God had been waiting for a long time too. They waited for the Messiah, the one who would come to save them. And they wondered too: How will we recognize the Messiah? Will the Messiah be a queen, a king, perhaps the leader of an army or a farmer? How were they to know when the Messiah would come? What would be the sign that would tell them?

John the Baptist, while he was in prison, asked these same questions: How are we to know if Jesus is the Messiah for whom we have been waiting, or should we wait for someone else? What signs will show us if Jesus is the Messiah?

John sent his messengers to ask Jesus, "Are you the Messiah?" How did Jesus answer? He reminded them of what the prophet *Isaiah* had said. Do you remember what *Isaiah* told us about the Messiah? What signs would we see?

Jesus told the messengers of John, "Go tell John what you see and hear—those who were blind can see; those who were deaf can hear...."

Do we see any signs of God's presence among us today? When we see sick people being healed, sadness being turned into joy, people helping one another, these are signs that Jesus is here.

Who are the people today who are waiting for the Messiah? Who are the blind, the deaf, the crippled, the poor?

Do you know some who help these people? These helpers show us that the Messiah is with us. (Help the children identify people they actually know in their family, parish, community, neighborhood.)

Jesus wants to be their Messiah. He calls us to help these people in his name, to bring

