

The Jesse Tree and John the Baptist 2nd Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Isaiah 11:1-10—The Shoot from the Stump of “Jesse’s Tree”

1. Future King and Kingdom: A “shoot” from the “stump” of Jesse (cf. 1 Sam 16)
2. Messiah: ‘anointed’ with the sevenfold gifts of the “Spirit”
3. Prophet and Judge: judges with “righteousness”; the “rod of his mouth”
4. New Creation: undoing the effects of the Fall (cf. Gen 2-3)
5. New Jerusalem: no pain or destruction on “holy mountain” (cf. Isa 2)
6. Ingathering of Gentiles: him shall the “nations” (Hebrew *goyim*) seek
7. New Temple: his “dwellings” (literally, “tabernacles”) shall be glorious

Psalm 72—The Future King of the World

1. Future King: desire for a righteous king (vv. 1-2)
2. Universal Kingdom: Time of peace and justice (vv. 7-8)
3. Social Justice: cares for the poor, needy, and oppressed (vv. 12-14)
4. Everlasting Name: “all nations” will call him blessed (v. 17)

Romans 15:4-9—The Old Testament Gives us Hope

1. Jewish Scripture: things written in “former days” “written for our instruction”
2. Encouragement of the Scriptures: we might have “hope”
3. A God Who Keeps His Promises: to bless the Jews and “the Gentiles”

Matthew 3:1-12—John the Baptist and the Coming King

1. Isaiah 40: “good news” of the coming of God and his kingdom (cf. Isa 40:1-12)
2. New Elijah: “a garment of haircloth, with a belt of leather” (2 Kings 1:8)
3. The Divine “Axe”: an allusion to Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 10:33-11:1)
4. He Who Is Coming: baptism with “the Holy Spirit” and fire; coming judgment

The Liturgy: Preface II of Advent

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
Always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

*For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him,
the Virgin Mother longed for him
with love beyond all telling.
John the Baptist sang of his coming
and proclaimed his presence when he came...*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

1. During Advent, the Church “unites herself” to the “desire” of John the Baptist
(see CCC 524)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (2nd Sunday of Advent, Year A)

1. Before studying Isaiah 11 carefully, were you aware of the biblical roots of the contemporary custom of making a “Jesse Tree” during Advent? Was there any aspect of the prophecy of the “shoot” from Jesse’s Stump that stood out for you? Why?

2. Prayerfully read through Psalm 72 and its vision of a future king of righteousness and universal kingdom. Then consider: What titles for Jesus come most naturally to you? Is “king” one of them? If not, why not? Compare the kingdom described in Psalm 72 with your own experience of contemporary political leaders and governments.

3. Why is John the Baptist so prominent in the Sunday Readings for Advent? What significance should imitation of John have for us during the Advent season? Practically speaking, how can we follow the Church and make John the Baptist’s “desire” for the coming of Christ our own? (CCC 523)

For Further Reading in the Catechism

1. St. John the Baptist: his mission and message (CCC 717-720)
2. St. John the Baptist and Advent Preparations (CCC 523-524)