

**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.

**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**

Bar 5:1-9

A reading from the prophet Baruch.  
Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and  
distress,  
put on the beauty of the glory of God for ever,  
wrap the cloak of the integrity of God around  
you,  
put the diadem of the glory of the Eternal on  
your head:  
since God means to show your splendour to  
every nation under heaven,  
since the name God gives you for ever will be,  
"Peace through integrity, and honour through  
devotedness".

Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights  
and turn your eyes to the east:  
see your sons reassembled from west and  
east  
at the command of the Holy One, jubilant that  
God has remembered them.  
Though they left you on foot,  
with enemies for an escort,  
now God brings them back to you  
like royal princes carried back in glory.  
For God has decreed the flattening  
of each high mountain, of the everlasting hills,  
the filling of the valleys to make the ground  
level  
so that Israel can walk in safety under the  
glory of God.  
And the forests and every fragrant tree will  
provide shade  
for Israel at the command of God;  
for God will guide Israel in joy by the light of  
his glory  
with his mercy and integrity for escort.  
The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**

Ps 125

Response:

**What marvels the Lord worked for us!  
Indeed we were glad.**

1. When the Lord delivered Zion from  
bondage,  
it seemed like a dream.  
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
on our lips there were songs. **(R.)**
2. The heathens themselves said: "What  
marvels  
the Lord worked for them!"  
What marvels the Lord worked for us!  
Indeed we were glad. **(R.)**
3. Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage  
as streams in dry land.  
Those who are sowing in tears  
will sing when they reap. **(R.)**

4. They go out, they go out, full of tears  
carrying seed for the sowing:  
they come back, they come back, full of  
song,  
carrying their sheaves. **(R.)**

**SECOND READING**

Phil 1:3-6. 8-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the  
Philippians.

Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with  
joy, remembering how you have helped to  
spread the Good News from the day you first  
heard it right up to the present. I am quite  
certain that the One who began this good  
work in you will see that it is finished when  
the Day of Christ Jesus comes. God knows  
how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ  
Jesus loves you. My prayer is that your love  
for each other may increase more and more  
and never stop improving your knowledge  
and deepening your perception so that you  
can always recognise what is best. This will  
help you to become pure and blameless, and  
prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you  
will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus  
Christ produces in us for the glory and praise  
of God.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

**Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight,  
and all mankind shall see the salvation of  
God.**

Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Lk 3:1-6

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Luke.

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's  
reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor  
of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his  
brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of  
Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch  
of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas  
and Caiaphas, the word of God came to  
John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.  
He went through the whole Jordan district  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the  
forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book  
of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness;  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley will be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be laid low,  
winding ways will be straightened  
and rough roads made smooth.  
And all mankind shall see the salvation of  
God.

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,**

**true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,**

*(all bow during the next three lines)*

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**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**

**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.**

.....  
Mother of Christ! Hear thou thy people's cry,  
Star of the deep, and portal of the sky!  
Mother of Him Who thee from nothing made,  
Sinking we strive and call to thee for aid;  
Oh, by that joy which Gabriel brought to thee,  
Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.  
*Antiphon to Our Lady for Advent and  
Christmas*



**PREPARE  
TO WELCOME  
THE LORD!**  
(LUKE 3:1-6)

Statue of St John the Baptist on the Charles Bridge in Prague, Czech Republic

**John the Baptist is the major figure in this year's Advent Gospel readings. Today's passage is the beginning of Luke's account of the ministry of Jesus, and John the Baptist appears at this point in all four Evangelists' versions.**

Luke situates the call of the Baptist in the context of world history, referring to the Roman emperor, the civil rulers of Palestine and the religious leaders of the people of Israel. He mentions that John is the "son of Zechariah", thus reminding us of the promises about this person made in the earlier account of his conception and birth.

John is the one preparing the way for the Lord: he presents this in terms of constructing a straight and level road along which a royal person can travel in a fit and comfortable manner. This sorting out of the landscape indicates the people's inner conversion, their sorting out of their lives, which they declare publicly by being baptised, undergoing ritual immersion in the river Jordan and having their sins forgiven. But the Baptist is not simply offering automatic pardon: he calls for a change of attitude and outlook, which is the underlying meaning of the biblical call to repentance. ■

## LEARN

*Metanoia* is the New Testament term for repentance.

*Metanoia* means changing our way of thinking, our attitude.

Advent is very much the Marian season, when we think about Mary as the model disciple, one who listens to the Word of God, meditates upon it and puts it into practice.

## SAY

**Prepare a way for the Lord:  
make his paths straight.**  
(Isaiah 40:3; Luke 3:4)

## DO

Take out the crib figure of Mary and place it in a prominent place where it can be easily seen: think about Mary and her positive response to God's invitation.



## REFLECT

**A**dvent is one of the two Christian seasons of penance as we prepare for a major feast: the other is Lent, which we associate more readily with penitential practices. There are purple vestments, and no *Gloria* at Mass. John the Baptist, who will also appear prominently in the next two weeks' Gospel readings, is the herald of the arrival of Jesus and calls on his listeners to make themselves ready to welcome the Messiah.

John's preaching centres on a radical change in the way in which people think: the word *metanoia* (repentance) does

not mean feeling sorry about wrong behaviour – although that may well be one result. It means adopting a different way in which we view ourselves, other people and our manner of living. Levelling hills and filling in valleys is a poetic way of presenting the task facing us: Advent is a time to think about the coming of Christ into our lives here and now and an invitation to remove the obstacles to receiving the Lord wholeheartedly at Christmas, as this means accepting "the salvation of God" which he offers.

However, once we have identified our shortcomings as disciples of Jesus, we

may find it easier to act ourselves into a different way of thinking, rather than the other way around. If we decide to correct our faults and quietly act accordingly, we may find that our lives change in a remarkable fashion. Advent is a gentler time than Lent: it is very much the Marian season, when we are encouraged to think about Mary and her place in God's plan. We are invited to think about our place in God's plan and to respond as best we can. Adjusting our way of thinking and behaving can be part of our response – and well worth the effort. ■