

January 4

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

God promises to bring Israel back to its land from the most remote parts of exile. In Zion Israel will rejoice over God's gift of food and livestock. Young women will express their joy in dancing; God will give gladness instead of sorrow.

⁷ Thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O Lord, your people,
the remnant of Israel."

⁸ See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor together;
a great company, they shall return here.

⁹ With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back;
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path where they shall not stumble,
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁰ Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him
and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock."

¹¹ For the Lord has ransomed Jacob
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

¹² They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.

¹³ Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy;
I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

¹⁴ I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the Lord.

Psalm: Psalm 147:12-20

Worship the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. (Ps. 147:12)

¹² Worship the Lord, O Jerusalem;
 praise your God, O Zion,

¹³ **who has strengthened the bars of your gates
 and has blessed your children within you.**

¹⁴ God has established peace on your borders
 and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

¹⁵ **God sends out a command to the earth,
 a word that runs very swiftly.**

¹⁶ God gives snow like wool,
 scattering frost like ashes.

¹⁷ **God scatters hail like bread crumbs.
 Who can stand against God's cold?**

¹⁸ The Lord sends forth the word and melts them;
 the wind blows, and the waters flow.

¹⁹ **God declares the word to Jacob,
 statutes and judgments to Israel.**

²⁰ The Lord has not done so to any other nation;
 they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Gospel: John 1:[1-9] 10-18

John begins his gospel with this prologue: a hymn to the Word through whom all things were created. This Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the world.

[¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.]

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

God's servant is endowed with God's spirit in order to bring justice to the nations. The servant will not exercise authority boisterously or with violence, nor will weariness ever prevent the fulfilling of the servant's task. God's old promises have been fulfilled; the servant's new assignment is to bring light to the nations.

¹ Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
 my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
 he will bring forth justice to the nations.

² He will not cry out or lift up his voice
 or make it heard in the street;

³ a bruised reed he will not break,
 and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
 he will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be crushed
 until he has established justice in the earth,
 and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

⁵ Thus says God, the Lord,
 who created the heavens and stretched them out,
 who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
 and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶ I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness;
 I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
 a light to the nations,

⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
 from the prison those who sit in darkness.

⁸ I am the Lord; that is my name;
 my glory I give to no other,
 nor my praise to idols.

⁹ See, the former things have come to pass,
 and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
 I tell you of them.

Psalm: Psalm 29

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters. (Ps. 29:3)

¹ Ascribe to the Lord, you gods,
 ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

**² Ascribe to the Lord the glory due God's name;
 worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**

³ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;
 the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

**⁴ The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice;
 the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.**

⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees;
 the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

**⁶ the Lord makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
 and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.**

⁷ The voice of the Lord
 bursts forth in lightning flashes.

**⁸ The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;
 the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

⁹ The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.
 And in the temple of the Lord all are crying, "Glory!"

**¹⁰ The Lord sits enthroned above the flood;
 the Lord sits enthroned as king forevermore.**

¹¹ O Lord, give strength to your people;
 give them, O Lord, the blessings of peace.

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Peter crosses the sharp religious boundary separating Jews from Gentiles and proclaims the good news of God's inclusive forgiveness in Jesus' name to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As a result of Peter's preaching, Cornelius and his family become the first Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

³⁴ Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who

ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Before Jesus begins his ministry, he is baptized by John, touched by the Spirit, and identified publicly as God's child.

¹³ Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from the heavens said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

January 18

First Reading: Isaiah 49:1-7

Here the servant, identified as Israel, speaks for herself and describes her honored mission. Called before her birth like Jeremiah and John the Baptist, the servant is not only to restore Israel. The servant's ultimate assignment is to bring news of God's victory to the ends of the earth. God in faithfulness has chosen Israel for this task.

¹ Listen to me, O coastlands;
 pay attention, you peoples from far away!
The Lord called me before I was born;
 while I was in my mother's womb he named me.
² He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
 in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
 in his quiver he hid me away.
³ And he said to me, "You are my servant,
 Israel, in whom I will be glorified."
⁴ But I said, "I have labored in vain;
 I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the Lord
 and my reward with my God."

⁵ And now the Lord says,
 who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,
 and that Israel might be gathered to him,
for I am honored in the sight of the Lord,
 and my God has become my strength—
⁶ he says,
"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
 to raise up the tribes of Jacob
 and to restore the survivors of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
 that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

⁷ Thus says the Lord,
 the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,
 the slave of rulers,
"Kings shall see and stand up;
 princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,

because of the Lord, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Psalm: Psalm 40:1-11

I love to do your will, O my God. (Ps. 40:8)

¹ I waited patiently upon the Lord,
who stooped to me and heard my cry.

**² The Lord lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the miry clay,
and set my feet upon a high cliff, making my footing sure.**

³ The Lord put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;
many shall see, and stand in awe, and put their trust in the Lord.

⁴ Happy are they who trust in the Lord!

They do not turn to enemies or to those who follow lies.

⁵ Great are the wonders you have done, O Lord my God! In your plans for us, none can be compared with you!

Oh, that I could make them known and tell them! But they are more than I can count.

**⁶ Sacrifice and offering you do not desire;
you have opened my ears: burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required.**

⁷ And so I said, "Here I am; I come.
In the scroll of the book it is written of me:

**⁸ 'I love to do your will, O my God;
your law is deep within me.'**"

⁹ I proclaimed righteousness in the great assembly;
I have not restrained my lips, O Lord, you know.

¹⁰ I have not hidden your righteousness in my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your deliverance;

I have not concealed your steadfast love and truth from the great assembly.

¹¹ You are the Lord; do not withhold your compassion from me;
may your steadfast love and your truth continually keep me safe.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Though God's church in Corinth is a fractious congregation beset with many conflicts, Paul opens this letter by spotlighting the multiple ways God has enriched and sustained its life as part of the divine call into the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

² To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus,

called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind ⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you ⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the partnership of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel: John 1:29-42

John the Baptist's witness to Jesus initiates a chain of testimony as his disciples begin to share with others what they have found.

²⁹[John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Chosen One."

³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

January 25

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali experienced the gloom of defeat by Assyrian military forces, but they are assured that their condition will be reversed when God makes a light-filled appearance. The joy they will experience will resemble celebrations of great harvests, because God will deliver them from everything that diminishes or oppresses them.

¹There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time [the Lord] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Psalm: Psalm 27:1, 4-9

The Lord is my light and my salvation. (Ps. 27:1)

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

**⁴One thing I ask of the Lord; one thing I seek;
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to gaze
upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek God in the temple.**

⁵For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter,
hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high upon a rock.

**⁶Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me.
Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of rejoicing; I will
sing and make music to the Lord.**

⁷Hear my voice, O Lord, when I call;

have mercy on me and answer me.

⁸My heart speaks your message— “Seek my face.”

Your face, O Lord, I will seek.

⁹Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your servant in anger.

Cast me not away—you have been my helper; forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Paul calls on the Corinthians to end their dissensions and share the unified outlook of the gospel. Discord arises when we forget that we belong not to human leaders or institutions but to Christ. Indeed, the unifying word of the cross of Christ is the center of the gospel and the power of God’s salvation.

¹⁰Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you but that you be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹For it has been made clear to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹²What I mean is that each of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” ¹³Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel—and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus begins his public ministry shortly after John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod. He proclaims the nearness of God’s reign and calls four fishermen to be his first disciples.

¹²Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,

on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness

have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned."

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.