

First Reading: *Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 (JB)*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I exult for joy in the Lord.

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken;

to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.

'I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God,
for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity, like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.

'For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord make both integrity and praise spring up in the sight of the nations.'

Second Reading: *1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 (JB)*

A reading from first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

May you all be kept blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything - hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

Gospel: *John 1:6-8, 19-28 (JB)*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.

A man came, sent by God. His name was John.

He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you unknown to you the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.