



# Daily Reflections



Week beginning Sunday 9 December  
(2nd Sunday of Advent Year C)  
To  
Saturday 15 December 2018

## Sunday 6 December – Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Baruch 5: 1-9; Psalm 125(126); Philippians 1: 4-6, 8-11; Luke 3: 1-6

*Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,  
and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God.  
Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;  
put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;  
for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven.  
For God will give you evermore the name,  
'Righteous Peace, Godly Glory'.*

It is clear that a city cannot take off and put on garments! Baruch is personifying Jerusalem and seeing the holy city as a beloved woman. Because of the sins of her people—and the removal of many of her sons and daughters into exile, she has put on the clothes of sorrow—rather like us wearing dark colours for a funeral. Baruch tells her to put those clothes aside and to put on those that God will provide. These are clearly beautiful—but not just in terms of human ornamentation. Their beauty comes from the righteousness and glory that come from God that they represent.

- What is the difference between physical beauty and a beauty that comes from within?
- What do “robes of righteousness” look like in the life of a city?

Jerusalem has a unique role in Judaism—but also in Christianity and Islam. It is a city with different faces. It is a city of great holiness—a modern city with shops and commerce—a tourist city. It is also a deeply divided city. Pray today for this city that has played such a prominent part in our scriptures—and those of others. Pray that it will become a powerful witness to righteousness and justice and so give glory to God.

Pray today for the grace to recognise God’s teachings as ways to help you to live a good and fulfilling life. If you are struggling with one (or more!) bring it into an time of prayer—asking the Lord to open your mind and heart to the wisdom that lies behind it.

## Saturday 15 December

Scripture: Ecclesiasticus 48: 1-4, 9-12; Psalm 79(80); Matthew 17: 10-13

*Then Elijah arose, a prophet like fire,  
and his word burned like a torch...*

...

*When Elijah was enveloped in the whirlwind,  
Elisha was filled with his spirit.*

...

*Never in his lifetime did he tremble before any ruler,  
nor could anyone intimidate him at all.*

Elijah and Elisha were two of the greatest prophets—speaking and acting with great authority. It is probably unfair to say that they were never afraid since they were often called to speak truth to power—which is almost always a terrifying prospect. Power often actually knows the truth already and does not welcome others pointing it out. And yet, God insists on calling people out to see and hear injustice and, though not in the league of Elijah and Elisha, to speak out and to be in solidarity with those suffering at the hands of those who abuse power.

- Do you think being a prophet stops you being afraid—even if you refuse to be intimidated?
- Why do we need people who speak truth to power? And how can we support them?

Reflect today on situations in the world—or the Church—or other situation—where truth needs to speak to power. If you sense you are someone being called to do this, pray for wisdom and courage to fulfil your task. If you do not feel this call, pray for those who do have it.

We look at the situation and see all sorts of problems—often far worse in our imagination than they are in reality—and find ourselves unable to act. Isaiah reminds us that God is at our side. If we are working with God—then, yes, we will be afraid, but we will find the courage to act to his good purpose.

- When have you been paralysed by fear—unwilling or unable to act because of what you were afraid might happen?
- When have you faced the fear—trusted in God—and acted or spoken as you felt was right—even if it was not easy?

If you are in a situation where you are aware of fear limiting your capacity to act as your conscience tells you you should, use these words as a kind of mantra during the day. If you are not in such a position, pray for those who are.

## Friday 14 December (St John of the Cross)

Scripture: Isaiah 48: 17-19; Psalm 1; Matthew 11: 16-19

*I am the Lord your God,  
who teaches you for your own good,  
who leads you in the way you should go.*

It is easy to forget that God's commandments are not given simply to test our obedience but are designed to help us to live in ways that give us and those around us a deep well-being. Many of the commandments are rooted in common sense—stealing and murder are deeply destructive to the victims but also to the perpetrators. God does not need commandments—but knows that human beings do... not to limit their lives but to help them to live them to the full.

- Which commandments or teachings do you find irksome or frustrating?
- When have you found that living in accordance with a difficult teaching has, in fact, proved to be wise and life-giving?

## Monday 10 December

Scripture: Isaiah 35: 1-10; Psalm 84; (85); Luke 5: 17-26

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.*

It is not so very long ago that many of us were looking at yellowing and patchy lawns and grassy areas and wondering if they would ever recover. It did not take much rain to do so! The cracked ground gave us an insight into conditions that desert-dwellers live with all the time. However, just occasionally, the rain will fall in the desert and an apparent miracle happen. Overnight, the barren desert is full of colour. It is this transformation that inspires Isaiah—recognising it as a sign of God's life-giving work in the world.

- Looking back at the summer—what are your memories of the sunshine—heat—and the effect it had on plants in your garden or locality?
- What must it be like to live for years in dryness and drought?

Take a look at photos of [Deserts in bloom](#) (online if you receive this electronically—or in books or brochures). Marvel at the abundance of life that lies hidden—just waiting for the right moment to flower and flourish. Reflect on how this might speak of your own times of dryness and the promise of God to refresh and renew you.

## Tuesday 11 December (St Damasus)

Scripture: Isaiah 40: 1-11; Psalm 95(96); Matthew 18: 12-14

*He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.*

Today's First Reading opens with the words "Comfort—oh comfort my people" (NRSV) or "Console my people, console them" (Jerusalem) and goes on to offer different perspectives on this. It culminates in this tender image—one that Jesus will pick up as the Good Shepherd. He is casting back into the history of his people and finds this gentle but powerful image of the one who gathers up the young and the weak and leads his flock to good pasture. This tenderness belies the toughness a shepherd needs in order to protect his flock but gives a profound testimony to what a good spiritual shepherd can be like.

- How comfortable are you with the idea of being a lamb gathered in the arms of the Good Shepherd?
- What does this passage remind us about the responsibility of those charged with shepherding God's People?

There is an aria in Handel's Messiah that uses this quote. You might like to use it as a meditation at some point during the day. You can find it online [here](#) or find or borrow a recording.

## Wednesday 12 December (Our Lady of Guadalupe)

Scripture: Isaiah 40: 25-31; Psalm 102(103); Matthew 11: 28-30

*Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.*

How many of us have watched young children and wished we could bottle their energy! Yet even they will get tired and crash out—eventually. It is the lot of humans to run out of energy from time to time—physically but also spiritually. It is at the point when we realise that our own strength is giving way that we have a choice— to give up—to try to push on under our own strength—or to turn to the Lord and place ourselves in his strength – his power – his endurance. We may not find ourselves physically flying—but will almost certainly find reserves we did not know we had... not ours but God's at work within and through us.

- When have you felt that you were mounting up "with wings like eagles" - in a time of prayer—or worship—or simply an exhilarating human experience?
- When have you come to the end of your own strength—prayed—and found inner reserves to keep going?

Give thanks for times in your life when you have been aware of the power of God at work within you. If you are at a time in your life when the energy feels depleted, simply acknowledge this before God—and ask him to take over for a while.... and trust that he is doing so!

## Thursday 13 December (St Lucy)

Scripture: Isaiah 41: 13-20; Psalm 144(145); Matthew 11: 11-15

*For I, the Lord your God,  
hold your right hand;  
it is I who say to you, 'Do not fear,  
I will help you.'*

It is said that there are 365 statements along the lines of "do not be afraid" or "do not fear" scattered throughout the Bible—one for every day of most years. It is clear that one of the over-riding problems facing God's people from its earliest days has been fear. Fear has a place—it can make us aware of our limitations and may stop us taking silly risks. But it can also paralyse us—especially if faced with something that we would rather not have to deal with.