Guest of the Lamb • Breaking open the word

Readings

Isaiah 11:1-10
On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.

Romans 15:4-9
May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus

Matthew 3:1-12
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

You can read the full text of this Sunday's readings here:

Scriptures for the Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle A

Reflection

If you went to Catholic school, you know that a sacrament is: an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. This means that God set up these moments for us to experience God more deeply—to let us know that we are loved, cared for and that our needs are going to be met. The sacrament of Baptism and its completion, the sacrament of Confirmation, make us intentional members of God's family. It is through them that we receive God's Holy Spirit, which is the source of all true peace. The first reading from the Prophet Isaiah actually names the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we receive in Confirmation. It's this Spirit that restores creation to God's intended plan—even a human child is reconciled with the snake.

In Paul's letter to the Romans this week, he mentions "endurance and encouragement" twice—so you *know* it's important. It's followed by his mention of us being in "harmony", "one accord" and "one voice". *Three* times! So *that's* got to be important. God encourages us and gives us the endurance we need to in order to be at peace with one another. If we live that way, we will welcome those who are not baptized, or maybe not living their baptismal call fully. We can be a light to the world if we do.

The Gospel shows us the baptism of John the Baptist, who was a wild figure and didn't mind yelling at people. He would baptize anyone who wanted to take their relationship with God seriously, but if you came to him without really looking to change your life, he'd let you know that you had a problem because he had a problem with you. He warns those folks that his baptism was one thing, but what Jesus was bringing would really change their lives. And it does. If we are open to the gift of God's grace in our lives by living out the vocation of our Baptism and Confirmation, we really, truly can change the world.

Break open the word with your family

Kids

How cool would it be if you really could pet all the animals of the world like it says in the first reading? What animal would you most want to make friends with?

Teens

The gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the first reading are: "wisdom and of understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and of fear of the LORD". Throw in piety and you've got everything the Spirit gives you in Confirmation. How do you see these gifts as tools to help you make peace in our

world?

Adults

It takes all kinds to make up the Church—gentle folks like Jesus, wild, outspoken guys like John, brilliant speakers like Paul. The baptized faithful are an interesting bunch, and our acceptance of one another is supposed to be a welcoming to the unbaptized. How is your life a witness to others of Jesus' acceptance and welcome? Do you ever invite anyone to Church? Who could you invite; maybe to attend Christmas Mass with you this year?

A little lectio

The ancient practice of prayerfully reflecting on bits of Scripture is known as *lectio divina*. Want to try it out with your family? Head over to Lectio Divina for Kids to find out how to adapt this prayer practice for your kids.

A little Bible study

Want to do a little Bible study with your kids? Here are some tips:

- During Ordinary Time, the Church pairs the Old Testament and New Testament readings in a way that each sheds light on the other. Ask your kids to look for the common theme connecting the two readings. (Sometimes it's obvious, sometimes it is subtle.) How does the "dialogue" between the readings help you understand them better?
- Get a New American Bible, Revised Edition, and take a look at the footnotes for these readings. How do they change your understanding of what is going on?
- Take a look at the context for the readings—what happens

before, or after?

- Read the NABRE’s introduction to the book of the Bible that the readings are taken from. How does that help you understand the readings?
- If you don’t have a copy of the NABRE at home, you can view it online at the USCCB website at the Daily Readings web page.

For even more resources for breaking open this Sunday’s readings, head over to The Sunday Website.