

# Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of December, 2016

by Terry A . Modica



## Second Sunday of Advent

December 4, 2016

Read:

Isaiah 11:1-10  
Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17  
Romans 15:4-9  
Matt 3:1-12

### Reflect:

Peace is the theme of the Second Sunday of Advent. The first reading describes Christ the Messiah, who came from the line of Jesse, the father of King David. It also describes how to obtain peace – a peace that sustains us even in the midst of troubles: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." Can you feel the Holy Spirit "resting" on you?

We experience true peace when we're in a restful relationship with God, i.e., when we're not struggling against him and his ways and his plans for us. Peace does not depend on bringing to an end the struggles we have with people or the problems we have with financial shortages or addictions or health, etc. We can work hard to accomplish peace in any trial, win the war, and still not be at peace.

Peace comes to us in the wisdom and understanding that we get from the Holy Spirit. Peace comes from following the Spirit's counsel and relying upon God's strength. Peace comes from gaining knowledge of the truth that God wants us to know, in total submission to his authority, obediently acting upon the truth.

In the Gospel reading, John the Baptist reminds us to "prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his paths." To receive the Spirit of God and his peace, we must prepare ourselves to meet Jesus in the Eucharist and in all the other ways that he comes to us. What kind of preparation produces peace? It's the work of honestly identifying our sins, happy that God is merciful, and straightening our crooked paths, because we realize that God's ways are really what's best for us.

Whatever separates us from God's peace, we must get rid of it. To do this, we have the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Penitential Rite at the beginning of every Mass. Christ equips us for the journey into true peace!



### Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † What turmoil is going on in your life? What has stolen your peace?
- † Where is Jesus? What obstacles (e.g., unforgiveness or resentment) do you need to repent of to see him and feel his peace?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † What methods do you use to settle down and rest in the Spirit of Jesus when turmoil is spinning around you? What kind of prayer helps? Do you go on retreat or confide in a spiritual director? What are some other ideas?

### Comments/Prayer Requests:

## Christmas: The Nativity of the Lord

December 25, 2016

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### Readings for Vigil Mass

Isaiah 62:1-5  
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25  
Matthew 1:1-25

### Readings for Mass at Midnight

Isaiah 9:1-6  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-14

### Readings for Mass at Dawn

Isaiah 62:11-12  
Titus 3:4-7  
Luke 2:15-20

### Readings for Mass During the Day

Isaiah 52:7-10  
Hebrews 1:1-6  
John 1:1-18

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### Reflect:

Joy to the world! This is our song. This is what we should always be proclaiming as a people of faith.

Don't focus on what destroys your joy, for nothing can destroy the coming of the Lord. The absence of joy is merely a blank area in your view of what God is doing.

Look at the love that Jesus has for you! Jesus was born not only to save you from the darkness of sin; he was born because he loves you -- he loves YOU! Even if you had never sinned, he would have come into the world so that he could love you on your level, human-to-human.

Sometimes, great things come in surprising packages that do not seem to be great at all. The Eucharist -- in the form of a little wafer of bread -- does not look like it contains the full presence of Jesus with all of his humanity and his divinity. The baby Jesus -- a tiny, helpless child -- does not look like the conqueror of evil. But he is! And so is Jesus in the Eucharist; he is here for you.



And you! You might not seem to be a great person, but you contain Jesus. You contain greatness beyond imagining! This greatness does not dwell only in you; it comes out from you in every good thing that you do. This is a life of faith!

To be a follower of Jesus means we learn to imitate him. In doing good, evil is defeated. In this goodness, the greatness of Jesus extends outward from us. In this goodness, there is cause for great joy.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † How much do you really believe that Jesus loves you?
- † What are some examples of Jesus taking good care of you?
- † How do you reveal the love of Jesus to others?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † Share the story of the first time you can remember experiencing the love of Jesus and realized that it was a gift from God.
- † What does the Eucharist mean to you? How can it change you so that you leave church ready to give the love of Christ to others?

### Comments/Prayer Requests: