

## Advent 2 2025 (Year A)

Isaiah 11:1-10 Ps 71; Rom 15:4-9; Matt 3:1-12

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From the 17<sup>th</sup> of December until Christmas Day I will be singing my favourite of all the Prefaces to the Eucharistic prayer. It is my favourite simply for these two beautiful images:

*The Virgin Mother longed for him*

*With love beyond all telling*

*John the Baptist sang of his coming*

*and proclaimed his presence when he came.*

I can understand quite easily why this verse says that the Virgin Mother longed for Jesus – that she was longing for God with all her heart is the reason she was chosen to bear His Son. Her longing is real. As she waited for him to be born, as she felt Him grow larger and larger in her womb, I am certain that she sang to him. And He listened. However, nowhere in scripture does it say that John the Baptist actually sang.

His song was of a higher nature. It is a metaphor for the pouring out of his whole being into the worship of God and calling of his people to repentance. Just as we use song - and by extension all music - to express all our highest emotions and strongest yearnings it is right to say the John the Baptist sang of the Son of God's coming. This is why I sing those words of the Preface and don't just say them: they are my prayer for myself and for all of you, they are a Confession of Love. But before I sing them, I go before a priest and say '*Bless me Father, for I have sinned.*' I need to kneel before God and say, I have wounded the one who loved me first and I hate that I have done so. Then I am ready to be touched by God and kneel at His crib at Christmas filled with awe and understanding of what is given to the waiting world.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt 3: 11-12

Matthew and Ashlea, you have brought Evelyn here to be Baptised. Both her material and spiritual well-being have been entrusted to you. As parents you have a the most important of duties. On Thursday past the Church celebrated the memorial of St John Damascene. Of him a commentator wrote that St John was 'dangerously clear' in what he said. We live in a world which prefers obfuscation and indistinction before clarity. To borrow a phrase then, the Gospel is 'dangerously clear' as what you are asking for from Jesus and His Church by bringing Evelyn here. Another John - the Baptist - says in today's reading:

*... he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'*<sup>1</sup>

You are asking for the Holy Spirit and for fire for Evelyn. Not the fire of useless chaff being burnt up, but the consuming fire of love for what is Holy, for Jesus, God the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is your duty to exemplify this love, this burning fire, in your own lives, through prayer, devotion and care. Continue to nurture it in each other, as I know you already do, and it will be nurtured in Evelyn: you will become dangerously clear icons of Christ. In time she will be ready to come to God's altar to receive God's most precious gift: His Son.

And now you, children coming for 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion, and to you their parents: What do you seek? Well children, you were Baptised, which means that your parents want you to share in the eternal happiness of life with God. Parents, you are seeking the same thing that you did when you brought them for Baptism, but now you wish them to be strengthened in their faith and start being prepared to move out into the world where they will not always have you to protect and

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guide them. There is only so far your wisdom will take them, and this is why Jesus offers Himself to them. How will you receive Him?

It is not enough to say, well we have had 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion, this is sufficient, we have achieved what we set out to do and now we can rest. It is a train journey. If you treat receiving Communion like purchasing a train ticket for a distant destination, but just enter the platform and never get on the train - spend your time in the coffee shop - then you will never get to where you thought you were going. You need to get on the train, to turn to Jesus again and again, daily, to seek him in Holy Communion as often as you can: in prayer, in happy moments, in tired moments, in snatched moments throughout the day, grace before every meal and time set aside to read the bible and pray both as family and as an individual. This is why you are alive: to live, as a pilgrim in Hope, and not obscurely but with a clarity of purpose , rigour, and a knowledge of your destination.

And now we can really start preparing for Christmas.