

**Lectionary readings: Isaiah 6: 1-8; Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3: 8-15a; Mark 1: 1-8 (Second in Advent)**

For reflection and prayer

- **Isaiah 6:** This is Isaiah's vision in the Temple. Isaiah feels he has looked God in the face. And, in coming face to face with God, he has come face to face with himself. And, in the light of God's holiness, his own sinfulness is stark and fills him with guilt. But in his vision he is cleansed and accepted by God and invited by God to be God's spokesman. We come face to face with God in Jesus, and therefore with ourselves as unworthy, imperfect, frail, weak. But God comes to us, as He came to Isaiah, and assures us of His forgiveness, His acceptance, His love. And He gives us an invitation too: *'Whom shall I send? Who will go?'* In our secular society Advent can be a kind of spiritual wilderness. And God is calling each one of us to go out and be Christ revealing Him to people crying out for meaning and hope. So God waits for our response to His call. What is our response to be?
- **Psalm 85:** This Psalm speaks of God's graciousness to us in giving us so many blessings, offering us forgiveness and giving us the opportunity of new life. Let's listen to God this week and hear what He is saying to us. I love v8 in 'Psalms for Praying': *'Listen, O people, in the silent chapel of your heart; and the Beloved will speak of peace to you.'* Let's spend time with God, opening ourselves to Him and allowing Him into all we do this week, focusing on love, peace, righteousness and joy so that our lives are glorifying to God as we reach out with His peace and love.

- **2 Peter 3:** *'With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day. God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness He's giving everyone space and time to change.'* Advent is such a time for a new beginning. *'Do you see how essential it is to live a holy life?'* (a whole life, a healed life, a surrendered life). Let's use this time of Advent, not just to prepare for Christmas, but to spend time with God so that our lives are dwelling places of God, our whole being immersed in God so that we may be changed and prepare a world (or a small part of the world) where Christ will be at home.
- **Mark 1:** *'The good news of Jesus Christ'* - so begins Mark's Gospel. So why is Christmas 'bad news' for so many in our society today, so much so that they - and perhaps we too - long for it to be over to get back to 'normal'? John the Baptist reminds us of why Jesus came - to change our life, a change that will be brought about by the Holy Spirit within us. This Advent, will we allow ourselves to be worn out by immersing ourselves in shopping, tinsel, decorations etc so that we arrive at Christmas feeling exhausted and hating the whole business? Or will we immerse ourselves in God, living prayerfully, open and receptive to welcoming Jesus into our lives to minister to us, refresh us, renew us and change us, and therefore the society we live in?

A prayer

Lord, may Your presence be interwoven throughout each day of Advent. As we journey through this week, touch our hearts and open our eyes that we may rejoice in Your presence. May we discover You in the quiet space we carve out as well as in the busy-ness of our days. Amen.