



Tuesday of the 1st Week of Advent



Date: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 | **Season:** Advent | **Year:** A

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1–10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 12, 13, 17 | **Response:** Psalm 72:7

Gospel Acclamation: Let us see, O Lord, your merc and give us your saving help.

Gospel Reading: Luke 10:21–24

Preached at: The Jesuit Institute in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Dear friends in Christ, today’s readings invite us to see how God plants new life in places that seem cut down, and how a humble, childlike heart becomes the soil where this new life grows.

Isaiah tells us that a shoot rises from the stump of Jesse. Not the proud heights of David’s royal throne, but a stump, low to the ground, stripped of grandeur, carrying only the memory of what once was. Yet from that stump, says the prophet, God will draw forth a new branch, a new beginning, a new king. Isaiah paints a world reordered by the Spirit, where wisdom rests on the shoulders of the Messiah, where justice rolls out not like thunder but like steady rain feeding thirsty earth, where wolves and lambs share pasture in a peace that sounds impossible until we remember the God who makes impossible things grow. Rabbinical tradition often read this image as a promise that when human strength has failed, divine strength begins. When dynasties crumble, God returns not to the palaces but to the roots, to the simple soil of Jesse’s name, before titles and crowns distorted trust. The stump we are told is not the end. It is the beginning again.

Our Psalm takes that tender shoot and imagines the landscape it will one day change. It dreams of a king who judges with fairness, defends the poor, lifts those laid low, and treats the weak not as burdens but as treasure. In this psalm the king is measured not by splendour but by solidarity. The psalmist sees days when justice blossoms and peace flows like a wide river, touching every shore. Those verses feel especially close to our own longing in South Africa today, where so many pray for leaders whose hearts bend toward service rather than self-preservation, toward the common good rather than private gain. In communities burdened by rising costs, shrinking opportunities, and the quiet ache of

young people who search for work and find only waiting, the psalm becomes not a distant ideal but an urgent prayer. It reminds us that the Messiah does not reign from afar. He steps into the dust of people's lives and restores dignity where it has been worn thin.

Then the Gospel from Luke draws us into the inner life of Jesus. We find him rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, a joy that rises not from success, not from applause, but from communion with the Father. Jesus praises the Father for revealing divine secrets not to the clever or the calculating but to the childlike, the open, the trusting. The Greek word for "revealed" carries the sense of a curtain quietly pulled aside, showing what was always there but unseen. Jesus speaks of prophets and kings who longed to see this day. Isaiah longed for it. David longed for it. Whole generations longed for it. And here we are, gathered in Advent, a season of longing, hearing Jesus say that God's heart is shown most clearly not to the proud who stand tall but to the humble who bend low.

Imagine, for a moment, entering that scene with Ignatius's gift of contemplation. Picture Jesus turning to you with that same joy, that same warmth, saying, "Blessed are your eyes for they see." What do you see? A world as God sees it or a world dulled by fear and exhaustion? Do you see only the stump, or can you sense the tiny green shoot breaking through?

Isaiah's stump and Luke's childlike gaze meet each other in the ground of our own hearts. Advent asks us to notice the places in us that have been cut down by disappointment, or scorched by worry, or hollowed by sin. It also asks us to trust that God can coax life from those very places. This is the heart of Ignatian spirituality: to look honestly at what is barren and still believe that grace is already rooting itself there. The examen teaches us to trace the quiet footprints of the Spirit in our day, to see how God reveals himself not through dazzling signs but through gentle invitations.

And in our society today, where so many live with the stump of what used to be secure jobs, stable communities, reliable systems, we may wonder how hope can grow again. Yet Scripture tells us that God's preferred soil is precisely the soil that looks unpromising. In families navigating rising food costs, in students who study by candlelight during power cuts, in elders who carry stories of struggle with remarkable courage, God is planting the seeds of a renewed world. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that justice is not optional. It is the natural fruit of

God's reign. When we lift the poor, we water the shoot. When we protect the vulnerable, we guard the branch. When we speak truth with kindness and courage, we clear the weeds that choke hope.

The saint we remember today, Saint Francis Xavier, understood this deeply. He travelled far with little more than zeal and a burning love for Christ, trusting that the Spirit could raise life in places that seemed spiritually barren. His letters speak with the same urgency and hope as Isaiah's prophecy. He planted the Gospel not with force but with fidelity, not with pride but with patience. He believed that a single heart set on fire could ignite a continent. And he teaches us still that mission does not always begin with strength. It often begins with a stump, a place reduced, a moment that feels small. But God loves to begin in smallness.

So Advent leads us back, again and again, to that quiet truth: God grows greatness through humility. God reveals glory through gentleness. God restores the world by restoring our hearts. And if we can, even for a moment, pray with Christ's own joy in the Spirit, the world that Isaiah described begins to feel less like poetry and more like a promise.

As we go forward this week, perhaps we can hold this image of the shoot from the stump. Let it rise in our imagination whenever we feel weary. Let it remind us that hope grows slowly but surely. Let it tell us that God is not finished with us, not finished with our communities, not finished with our country, not finished with his Church. The Holy One who draws life from stumps will draw life from us too.

Three questions for our prayer come to mind this evening:

- Where is the stump in my life, and what small shoot of grace might God be growing there?
- How is the Spirit inviting me to practise the childlike openness that Jesus praises in today's Gospel?
- Whom is God calling me to lift up this week, so that justice and peace may grow a little more in the soil of our world?

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