

O Lord, SET US FREE

A PENANCE SERVICE FOR ADVENT

Opening Hymn

(All stand.)

Presider: May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

P Brothers and sisters: we come together as people who know we need a redeemer who has the power to set us free from our sins. And we come together to rejoice that we have such a powerful redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the whole world. As we prepare to celebrate his coming among us, it is especially fitting that we take time to remember the cause of our great joy in the Savior's birth.

(Pause for reflection.)

P Father, you sent Jesus to restore us to wholeness through his life, death and resurrection, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, you continue to set us free to follow him and receive the gift of healing and wholeness. Give us now the confidence to come before you seeking mercy and forgiveness.

A Amen.

P Lord Jesus, you came not to condemn the world, but to set us free from sin, and so we say: Lord, have mercy.

A Lord, have mercy.

P Christ Jesus, you did not hide from death, but gave yourself up for our sakes, and so we say: Christ, have mercy.

A Christ, have mercy.

P Lord Jesus, you did not wait until we had repented, but redeemed us while we were still sinners, and so we say: Lord, have mercy.

A Lord, have mercy.

P God of true freedom, you show us the path to release us from the bondage of sin. Open our hearts to your word of forgiveness and mercy.

A Amen.

(All sit.)

1st Reading Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 146

C Lord, come and set your people free.

A Lord, come and set your people free.

C The LORD God keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

A Lord, come and set your people free.

C The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those that were bowed down.
The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

A Lord, come and set your people free.

C The fatherless and the widow he sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations.

A Lord, come and set your people free.

2nd Reading James 5:7-10

(All stand.)

Gospel Matthew 11:2-11

(All sit.)

Homily

Examination of Conscience

(All kneel.)

Reader: Even in the season of Advent, we may be afraid to think about the Lord coming in judgment at the end of time. God is a judge, but God's judgment enables us to leap and sing for joy.

A Do I consult the teaching of the Church and faithful Christians when I have to make an important decision? Am I able to pray "thy will be done," or am I too afraid to give God a central role in my life? Do I worship the "bottom line" more than the one, true God?

(Pause for reflection.)

P Let us pray:

A Lord, come and set your people free.

Reader: The prophet Isaiah reminds us again and again

that freedom alone will not bring true joy. When our freedom is used to follow God's will, then we have found the path to genuine joy.

A Have I yielded to temptations of pornography, illicit drugs or overindulgence in alcohol? Do I do my part to care for the environment and the goods of the earth?

(Pause for reflection.)

P Let us pray:

A Lord, come and set your people free.

Reader: The root meaning of obedience is "to listen." We listen to God's word in Scripture, but we must also listen to one another in order to love and serve them. Really listening to family and to those for whom we are responsible takes time and effort, but it is essential to loving service.

A Am I patient with my family, coworkers and friends, or do I try to force them to accept my point of view? Do I pray for them regularly? Am I patient with myself, or do I maintain impossibly high standards of perfectionism?

(Pause for reflection.)

P Let us pray:

A Lord, come and set your people free.

Reader: The virtue of patience does not mean being wishy-washy or indifferent. Rather, it means being firm in our commitments but trusting in God's plan more than our own schedules. Patience helps relationships grow, while grumbling and complaining poisons them.

A Do I gossip, or do I take my concerns directly to the person I have a problem with? Am I quick to judge others and then to reject them? Do I pray for my enemies and those with whom I disagree?

(Pause for reflection.)

P Let us pray:

A Lord, come and set your people free.

Reader: In prison, John the Baptist needed the reassurance of the Lord, so he sent his disciples to question Jesus. Questions and doubts, when we take them to the Lord in prayer, strengthen our faith rather than weaken it.

A Have I been faithful in my worship of God through Mass and the other sacraments? Do I accept the role of the Ten Commandments in bringing joy to my life? Do I strive to "love my neighbor as myself"?