

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11

- 1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the
brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those
who are bound;
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headress
instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint
spirit;
that they may be called oaks of
righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may
be glorified.
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former
devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations. . . .
8 For I the LORD love justice;
I hate robbery and wrong;
I will faithfully give them their
recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant
with them.
9 Their offspring shall be known among the
nations,
and their descendants in the midst of
the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are an offspring of the LORD who
blessed.
10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments
of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of
righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest
with a beautiful headress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her
jewels.

- 11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in
it to sprout up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness
and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing,
¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is
the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do
not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise proph-
ecies, ²¹but test everything; hold fast what is
good. ²²Abstain from every form of evil.

²³Now may the God of peace himself sanc-
tify you completely, and may your whole spirit
and soul and body be kept blameless at the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who
calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Holy Gospel: John 1:6–8, 19–28

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose
name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear
witness about the light, that all might believe
through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came
to bear witness about the light. . . .

¹⁹This is the testimony of John, when the
Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to
ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed, and
did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the
Christ." ²¹And they asked him, "What then?
Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you
the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." ²²So
they said to him, "Who are you? We need to
give an answer to those who sent us. What
do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the
prophet Isaiah said."

²⁴(Now they had been sent from the Phari-
sees.) ²⁵They asked him, "Then why are you
baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor
Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶John answered
them, "I baptize with water, but among you
stands one you do not know, ²⁷even he who
comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I
am not worthy to untie." ²⁸These things took
place in Bethany across the Jordan, where
John was baptizing.



About the Cover: *Ecce Agnus Dei!* ("Behold, the Lamb of God!")
These Latin words appear on the ribbon held by John the Baptist in
the seventeenth-century painting by Bernardo Strozzi. How fitting
that when we sing the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) prior to Holy
Communion, we are reminded of John's words and our reason for
gathering. Christ's body and blood—along with the benefits of His
sacrifice for us—are delivered, taking our sins away.

(and they asked John:)

Who are you?