**FIRST READING** Isaiah 11: 1-10

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David's descendants. The spirit of the Lord will give him wisdom and the knowledge and skill to rule his people. He will know the Lord's will and honour him, and find pleasure in obeying him. He will not judge by appearance or hearsay; he will judge the poor fairly and defend the rights of the helpless. At his command the people will be punished, and evil persons will die. He will rule his people with justice and integrity. Wolves and sheep will live together in peace, and leopards will lie down with young goats. Calves and lion cubs will feed together, and little children will take care of them. Cows and bears will eat together, and their calves and cubs will lie down in peace. Lions will eat straw as cattle do. Even a baby will not be harmed if it plays near a poisonous snake. On Zion, God's sacred hill, there will be nothing harmful or evil. The land will be as full of knowledge of the Lord as the seas are full of water. The Exiled People Will Return. A day is coming when the new king from the royal line of David will be a symbol to the nations. They will gather in his royal city and give him honour.

**Psalm 72: 1-7R** **In his time shall the righteous flourish,**

Teach the king to judge with your righteousness, O God; share with him your own justice, so that he will rule over your people with justice and govern the oppressed with righteousness. **R**

May the land enjoy prosperity; may it experience righteousness. May the king judge the poor fairly; may he help the needy and defeat their oppressors. May your people worship you as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon gives light, for ages to come. **R**

May the king be like rain on the fields, like showers falling on the land. May righteousness flourish in his lifetime, and may prosperity last as long as the moon gives light. **R**

**SECOND READING** Romans 15: 4-13

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us, in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us. And may God, the source of patience and encouragement, enable you to have the same point of view among yourselves by following the example of Christ Jesus, so that all of you together may praise with one voice the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, for the glory of God, as Christ has accepted you. For I tell you that Christ's life of service was on behalf of the Jews, to show that God is faithful, to make his promises to their ancestors come true, and to enable even the Gentiles to praise God for his mercy. As the scripture says, “And so I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to you.” Again it says, “Rejoice, Gentiles, with God's people!” And again, “Praise the Lord, all Gentiles; praise him, all peoples!” And again, Isaiah says, “A descendant of Jesse will appear; he will come to rule the Gentiles, and they will put their hope in him.” May God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace by means of your faith in him, so that your hope will continue to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**GOSPEL** Matthew 3: 1-12

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

**Glory to you O Lord.**

At that time John the Baptist came to the desert of Judea and started preaching. “Turn away from your sins,” he said, “because the Kingdom of heaven is near!” 3 John was the man the prophet Isaiah was talking about when he said, “Someone is shouting in the desert, ‘Prepare a road for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!’. John's clothes were made of camel's hair; he wore a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. People came to him from Jerusalem, from the whole province of Judea, and from all over the country near the Jordan River. They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan. When John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he said to them, “You snakes—who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. And don't think you can escape punishment by saying that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham! The axe is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire. I baptize you with water to show that you have repented, but the one who will come after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He is much greater than I am; and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. He has his winnowing shovel with him to thresh out all the grain. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**