

## First Sunday after Christmas, December 31

The Collect and Psalms will be read from The Episcopal Church book of Common Prayer.  
The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from the New Revised Standard  
Version Bible Anglicized

**The Collect:** Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word:  
Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus  
Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now  
and for ever. **Amen.**

### **Old Testament: Isaiah 61:10-11, - 62:3**

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
my whole being 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 with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.  
2 The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name

that the mouth of the Lord will give.

3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

**Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people**

**Psalm: 147 or 147:13-21**

[1 Hallelujah!

How good it is to sing praises to our God! \*

how pleasant it is to honor him with praise!

2 The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; \*

he gathers the exiles of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted \*

and binds up their wounds.

4 He counts the number of the stars \*

and calls them all by their names.

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; \*

there is no limit to his wisdom.

6 The Lord lifts up the lowly, \*

but casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; \*

make music to our God upon the harp.

8 He covers the heavens with clouds \*

and prepares rain for the earth;

9 He makes grass to grow upon the mountains \*

and green plants to serve mankind.

10 He provides food for flocks and herds \*

and for the young ravens when they cry.

11 He is not impressed by the might of a horse; \*

he has no pleasure in the strength of a man;

12 But the Lord has pleasure in those who fear him, \*

in those who await his gracious favor.]

13 Worship the Lord, O Jerusalem; \*  
praise your God, O Zion;  
14 For he has strengthened the bars of your gates; \*  
he has blessed your children within you.  
15 He has established peace on your borders; \*  
he satisfies you with the finest wheat.  
16 He sends out his command to the earth, \*  
and his word runs very swiftly.  
17 He gives snow like wool; \*  
he scatters hoarfrost like ashes.  
18 He scatters his hail like bread crumbs; \*  
who can stand against his cold?  
19 He sends forth his word and melts them; \*  
he blows with his wind, and the waters flow.  
20 He declares his word to Jacob, \*  
his statutes and his judgments to Israel.  
21 He has not done so to any other nation; \*  
to them he has not revealed his judgments.  
Hallelujah!

### **Epistle: Galatians 3:23-25;4:4-7**

23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. 6 And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' 7 So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

**Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people**

## **Gospel: John 1:1-18**

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

**On January 4 we celebrate the life of Elizabeth Seton, Founder of the American Sisters of Charity. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.**

Elizabeth Ann Seton was born in New York City on August 28, 1774. She was the founder of the Sisters of Charity, the first community of sisters established in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was reared in The Episcopal Church, her family having been loyalists during the American Revolution. From a young age, she desired to aid the sick and poor. In

1795 she married William Seton, and their family came to include five children. During this time she also founded the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. In 1801, the family business went bankrupt. In 1803, her husband showed the symptoms of tuberculosis, and they set sail for Italy in the hopes that the warm climate would cure his disease. The Italian authorities, fearing yellow fever, quarantined them in a cold stone hospital for the dying. William soon died and left Elizabeth a young widow with five children and few resources. While struggling with these losses, she was befriended by Roman Catholics and, as a result, was drawn to Roman Catholicism.

Returning to New York, she encountered bitter opposition from her Episcopalian family for her new religious leanings. With five children to support, she found herself alone and in financial straits. She turned to Roman Catholic clergy for support and, in 1805, she formally became a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1806, she met Father Louis Dubourg, who wanted to start a congregation of women religious, patterned after the French Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. In 1809 Elizabeth took vows and became “Mother Seton” to a small community of seven women, known as the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, dedicated to teaching. The sisters were given land in rural Maryland and, in 1810, they opened St. Joseph’s Free School to educate needy girls. The Sisters intertwined social ministry, education, and religious formation in all their varied works. Seton dispatched sisters to operate orphanages in Philadelphia and New York City. Out of the pioneering work of Elizabeth Seton, five independent communities of the Sisters of Charity now exist, offering ministry and care for the most vulnerable.

Elizabeth Ann Seton remained the Mother of the Sisters of Charity until her death on January 4, 1821.

**Let us pray:** Holy God, you blessed Elizabeth Seton with your grace as wife, mother, educator, and founder, that she might spend her life in service to your people: Help us, by her example, to express our love for you in love of others; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**