

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 43:16-21** God promises a new deliverance for His people (*ISV*)

<sup>16</sup>This is what the LORD says — who makes a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, <sup>17</sup>who brings out chariots and horsemen, and armies and warriors at the same time. They lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a candle: <sup>18</sup>“Don’t remember the former things; don’t dwell on things past. <sup>19</sup>Watch! I’m about to carry out something new! And now it’s springing up— don’t you recognise it? I’m making a way in the wilderness and paths in the desert. <sup>20</sup>Wild animals, jackals, and owls will honour Me because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wilderness to give drink to My people, My chosen ones, <sup>21</sup>the people whom I formed for Myself and so that they may speak My praise.”

**PSALM: Psalm 126** (*NIV*)

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. <sup>2</sup>Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, ‘The LORD has done great things for them.’ <sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. <sup>4</sup>Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev. <sup>5</sup>Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. <sup>6</sup>Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

**SECOND READING: Philippians 3:4b-14** Already righteous but not yet perfect (*NLT, alt*)

<sup>4b</sup>Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in the flesh, I have even more! <sup>5</sup>I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. <sup>6</sup>I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. <sup>7</sup>I once thought these things were valuable, but now

I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. <sup>8</sup> Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and become one with Him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead. I want to suffer with Him, sharing in His death, <sup>11</sup> so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! <sup>12</sup> I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. <sup>13</sup> No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

**GOSPEL: John 12:1-8** Mary anoints Jesus at Bethany (NET)

<sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Him. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected, <sup>5</sup> 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' <sup>6</sup> He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. <sup>7</sup> 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of My burial. <sup>8</sup> You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me.'