

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, 22 OCTOBER 2023

FIRST READING: Isaiah 45:1-7 The Lord appoints King Cyrus of Persia to do his will

45 'This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armour, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: ² I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. ³ I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. ⁴ For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honour, though you do not acknowledge me. ⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶ so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷ I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

PSALM 96:1 - 13

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ² Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. ³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. ⁴ For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. ⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. ⁶ Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary. ⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. ⁹ Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. ¹⁰ Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns.' The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. ¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. ¹² Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. ¹³ Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 Serving God in faith, hope, and love

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. **2** We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. **3** We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. **4** For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, **5** because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. **6** You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. **7** And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. **8** The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, **9** for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, **10** and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

GOSPEL: Matthew 22:15-22 The question about paying taxes

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. **16** They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. **17** Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not?' **18** But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, 'You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? **19** Show me the coin used for paying the tax.' They brought him a denarius, **20** and he asked them, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?' **21** 'Caesar's,' they replied. Then he said to them, 'So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.' **22** When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.