



*How beautiful on the mountains,
are the feet of the messenger announcing peace,
of the messenger of good news,
who proclaims salvation and says to Zion,
'Your God is king!'
The voices of your watchmen!
Now they raise their voices,
shouting for joy together,
for with their own eyes they have seen
The Lord returning to Zion.
Break into shouts together,
shouts of joy, you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has consoled his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The Lord has bared his holy arm
for all the nations to see,
and all the ends of the earth
have seen the salvation of our God.
The Lord marches at your head
and the God of Israel is your rearguard.*

Isaiah 52:7-12

Proclaiming the message

Saturday of Advent III

These verses are some of the most loved and evocative in the Old Testament. Once again, we can imagine them being composed as the returnees approach Jerusalem. They are bringing to the city a new era, one of peace and joy and a new faith in God. The invitation is to the city to break into songs and shouts of joy as it heralds the approach of the exiles.

The deep certainty of the Christian community is that it brings tidings of great joy to all the world. The first ever sermon preached to the Maori people on the soil of New Zealand, on Christmas Day 1814 by the Reverend Samuel Marsden, used the text from Luke 2:10, "*Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy.*" This certainty proceeds not from dogma but from the inner experience of the community of faith, an experience of joy without limit and unshakeable. This joy can transform every place, people and situation.