



Holy Family Readings

31 December 2023

FIRST READING

A reading from the Book of Genesis 15:1-6. 21:1-3

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great.'

'My Lord,' Abram replied 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless...' Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm Ps 104:1-6. 8-9. R/. vv.7.8

R/. He, the Lord, is our God. He remembers his covenant for ever.

Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
O sing to him, sing his praise;
tell all his wonderful works! **R/.**

Be proud of his holy name,
let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice.
Consider the Lord and his strength;
constantly seek his face. **R/.**

Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, the judgements he spoke.
O children of Abraham, his servant,
O sons of the Jacob he chose. **R/.**

He remembers his covenant for ever,
his promise for a thousand generations,
the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac. **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews 11:8. 11-12. 17-19

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.

It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: *It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on.* He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead;

and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel Acclamation

Heb 1:1-2

Alleluia, alleluia!

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 1:22-40

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: *Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord* – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the nations to see,
a light to enlighten the pagans
and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



Holy Family - 31 December 2023

The Word of God

As we gaze today at the scene of our crib, so peaceful, so silent, yet also so fragile, we consider how the little drama it portrays stands at the centre of all human history: how it is able to touch and sanctify in principle every single human life. Here we see God among us; received with love and veneration; communicating to all around his perfect holiness, his perfect happiness. In the eyes of the world these three are of no consequence whatever. In the eyes of God, in the sight of the angels, in the light of eternity, they are the truly significant ones on this earth.

They remind us where our own focus should be: where our own happiness most deeply lies. If we have all material comforts, if all our earthly projects go well, and all our ambitions are



satisfied - yet at cost of separation from Christ - then of all creatures we are most to be pitied. But if we have Christ: then even if all other things whatever are taken away, we are rich, blessed, happy, even now, beyond measure. May we all then rejoice this Christmastide in possession of Christ, in friendship with him: ever in union with his Immaculate Mother and St. Joseph. And may the Holy Family lead all whom we love, all who are in trouble, and all who have gone astray, to come at last to the fullness of joy in God that has no end.

Prayer of the Week

A Prayer for Family and Friends

Blessed are You, loving Father,
For all your gifts to us.
Blessed are You for giving us family and friends
To be with us in times of joy and sorrow,
To help us in days of need,
And to rejoice with us in moments of celebration..

Father,
We praise You for Your Son Jesus,
Who knew the happiness of family and friends,
And in the love of Your Holy Spirit.
Blessed are you for ever and ever.

Amen.



A Christmas Poem

A Christmas Carol

G K Chesterton (1900)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood on Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

