

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah = I-ZAY-uh

Ahaz = AY-haz

Proclaim in a clear, authoritative tone.

Read with firmness and energy.

Say as if you are scolding a child.

Use a tone of frustration.

Pause and project your voice.

Pause and emphasize the words in bold.

Emmanuel = ee-MAN-yoo-el

For meditation and context:

LECTIONARY #10

READING I Isaiah 7:10-14

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The LORD **spoke** to Ahaz, saying:

Ask for a **sign** from the **Lord, your God**;

let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!

But **Ahaz** answered,

"I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!"

Then **Isaiah** said:

Listen, **O** house of David!

Is it **not** enough for you to weary **people**,

must you **also** weary my **God**?

Therefore the Lord himself will give you **this sign**:

the virgin shall **conceive**, and bear a son,

and shall name him Emmanuel.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (7c, 10b)

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.

For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?

One whose hands are sinless, whose heart
is clean,
who desires not what is vain.

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.

Such is the race that seeks for him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

READING I

Isaiah's prophecy from the eighth century BC is set in the context of the powerful and brutal Assyrian empire, and a coalition of smaller nations against it. When Ahaz, ruler of the kingdom of Judah, refused to join the coalition, some of the neighboring kingdoms marched against him. In the face of Ahaz's wavering, Isaiah assured him that the coalition would not prevail, that he should stop being afraid, and should put his faith in the Lord.

After foretelling the fall of Judah's enemies, Isaiah tells Ahaz to ask for a sign from

the Lord. In an expression of pseudo-piety, Ahaz asserts that he will not tempt the Lord by asking for a sign. Seeing through Ahaz' hypocritical words, Isaiah sounds exasperated. Not only has Ahaz wearied the people, he has also wearied God! Even if Ahaz will not ask for a sign, God will give one anyway.

The exact meaning of the sign is unclear, and has been interpreted in a variety of ways. The one who will give birth is understood in Hebrew as any young woman of marriageable age. The unknown woman may refer to the wife of Ahaz or

Isaiah, or she could be any young woman of Judah. The focus is on the child born to her who will be a sign of God's presence during this time of turmoil.

As we hear the prophecy given to Ahaz during the Advent season, we see it fulfilled in a surprising way as the virgin Mary gives birth to a Son who is indeed Emmanuel, the presence of God among us.

READING II

Paul begins his letter to the Romans by introducing himself and his Gospel. Similar to numerous Hebrew ancestors, from patriarchs to kings

READING II Romans 1:1-7

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

In this reading, we are called to be holy. Start proclaiming in an informative tone.

Take your time and articulate your words.

Transition your tone to one of warmth.

Pause before you say the last line. A greeting of peace is given in love.

Paul, a slave of Christ **Jesus**,
called to be an apostle and **set apart** for the gospel of God,
 which he **promised previously** through his prophets in the
 holy Scriptures,
 the **gospel** about his **Son**, descended from **David** according
 to the flesh,
 but **established** as Son of God in power
 according to the Spirit of holiness
 through **resurrection** from the dead, **Jesus Christ our LORD**.
 Through **him** we have received the **grace** of **apostleship**,
 to bring about the obedience of faith,
 for the **sake** of **his** name, among **all** the **Gentiles**,
 among whom are you also, who are **called** to belong
 to Jesus Christ;
 to **all** the beloved of **God in Rome**, called to be **holy**.
 Grace to you and peace from **God** our Father
 and the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

and prophets who were regarded as slaves of the Lord, Paul is a slave of Jesus Christ. To be a slave in the biblical context of relationship with God signifies total, unwavering obedience. Secondly, Paul identifies himself as an apostle, one sent out as an authoritative representative of the one who sends him. The third way that Paul identifies himself, "set apart for the gospel of God," moves seamlessly into a summary of the Gospel.

The Good News that Paul proclaims was promised long ago through the prophets. Throughout the New Testament, we

see new, unexpected fulfillment of the Jewish tradition that can be understood only in light of the story of Jesus Christ. The content of the Gospel of God, most succinctly, is "about his Son." Everything that Paul and the other early evangelists write concerns Jesus Christ, Son of God, and long-awaited son of David. As the Davidic descendant, Jesus has a human origin, for he was born "according to the flesh."

Not only is Jesus son of David, he is also Son of God, revealed through his Resurrection from the dead. In just a few words, Paul has announced the heart of the

Good News of Jesus: Son of David, Son of God, born in the flesh, risen in power.

As Paul completes his introduction, he explains that the Good News about Jesus has far-reaching effects. Paul's own apostleship flows from Jesus Christ. He is sent to bring the Gospel to the Roman audience and to all who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. They are God's beloved, called to be holy, and to all of them Paul extends God's grace and peace.

GOSPEL

Matthew opens his Gospel with two accounts that tell