

# THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS): NIGHT

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh  
Midian = MID-ee-uhn

This reading is joyful! Take the congregation from darkness to light. Your voice must sound full of happiness.

Many hardships have been overcome. Let the assembly hear the trials in your voice.

Take your time. Articulate your words. Use vocal variety with this beautiful reading.

Pause after each name with a smile.

## LECTIONARY #14

READING I Isaiah 9:1-6

### A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a **great** light;  
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom  
a light has shone.  
**You** have **brought** them **abundant** joy  
and **great** rejoicing,  
as they rejoice before you as at the **harvest**,  
as people make merry when dividing **spoils**.  
For the yoke that **burdened** them,  
the pole on their **shoulder**,  
and the rod of their **taskmaster**  
**you** have smashed, as on the day of **Midian**.  
For every **boot** that tramped in battle,  
every **cloak** rolled in **blood**,  
will be burned as fuel for **flames**.  
For a **child** is born to us, a **son** is given us;  
upon his shoulder dominion **rests**.  
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,  
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. >>

There are options for readings today. Ask your parish staff which ones will be used.

**READING I** Being enshrouded in darkness and gloom was a situation well understood in Isaiah's eighth-century BC world. Not only did Assyria to the north threaten the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, but other, smaller nations put Judah in close and immediate danger. While the threat still looms, Isaiah announces that the people have seen the light of dawn. The verbs that specify that the light

has already transformed the darkness are often regarded as "prophetic past," indicating that divinely-inspired prophecies about the future that are so certain that they are as good as already completed.

After announcing the new dawn, Isaiah speaks directly and exuberantly to God, who has brought about joy to the people. In the past, God had defeated Midian in a display of miraculous power. The people who have experienced darkness in the form of military defeat and continuing menace have also experienced times of rejoicing. By using the imagery of a merry

harvest, Isaiah creates a scenario of a peaceful land devoid of enemy conflict. Situations that seem to be brought about by the people's own actions occur in reality only because of God's deeds. God has taken away the yoke that burdened them and the rod of their taskmasters. Just as God had acted so decisively in the past, so is God doing now. Throughout his prophecy, both in his words to the people and in this address to God, Isaiah seamlessly weaves together past, present, and future in telling of God's timeless saving deeds.

Build excitement in your voice.

End strongly with a firm belief in the Lord!

For meditation and context:

His dominion is vast  
and forever peaceful,  
from David's **throne**, and **over** his kingdom,  
which he confirms and sustains  
by judgment and justice,  
both now and forever.  
**The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 96:1–2, 2–3, 11–12, 13 (Luke 2:11)

**R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.**

Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all you lands.  
Sing to the LORD; bless his name.

Announce his salvation, day after day.  
Tell his glory among the nations;  
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;  
let the sea and what fills it resound;  
let the plains be joyful and all that is  
in them!

Then shall all the trees of the forest exult.

They shall exult before the LORD,  
for he comes;  
for he comes to rule the earth.  
He shall rule the world with justice  
and the peoples with his constancy.

READING II Titus 2:11–14

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Titus**

Beloved:

The grace of God has appeared, saving all  
and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires  
and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age,  
as we **await** the blessed hope,  
the appearance of the **glory** of our great **God**  
and savior Jesus **Christ**,  
who **gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness**  
and to cleanse for **himself** a people as his own,  
eager to do what is **good**.

Titus = Tĭ-tuhs

Notice that this reading is one long sentence.  
Take your time. Pause at the commas and  
keep your energy up.

blessed = BLES-uhd

Say this line and the next as one thought.

Pause and slowly proclaim the words in bold.

Smile as the reading ends.

As the distressed people long for God to fulfill the promise to raise up a righteous Davidic descendant, Isaiah assures them of the birth of a royal son. The child that God is giving “to us” will be even more than an ideal ruler. His name, “Wonder-Counselor, God-hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace,” expresses his intimate connection with God and people. His kingship for the sake of the people will be like God’s own. He will rule as an ever-present father, establish peace over a vast dominion, and reign with judgment and justice. Having described the child’s rule in terms reflective of God’s own

kingship, Isaiah concludes that the Lord’s zeal will accomplish this.

**READING II** Along with the two letters to Timothy, the letter to Titus is a pastoral epistle that instructs and exhorts Church leaders and their communities. The structure and richness of today’s short reading from Titus sounds like a biblically based liturgical hymn that may have been part of early Church worship. Through this hymn, believers confess their faith in God’s saving actions, including how God assists them to live in light of their faith. By

using the pronouns “us” and “we,” Paul includes himself and believers of later ages in this profession of faith.

God’s grace has already appeared, and is thus already effective, even as we await the appearance of God’s future glory. In this state of already-and-not-yet, God’s grace is active, training us to live rightly. The verb “to train” (*paideuein*) refers to the rearing and education of a child, consisting of intellectual, cultural, religious, and ethical dimensions. Such training aims at forming an ideal person to live well in society; from a religious perspective, this entails