

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS): DAY

LECTIONARY #16

READING I Isaiah 52:7-10

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings glad tidings,
announcing peace, bearing good news,
announcing salvation, and saying to Zion,
"Your God is King!"

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry,
together they shout for joy,
for they see directly, before their eyes,
the LORD restoring Zion.

Break out together in song,
O ruins of Jerusalem!

For the LORD comforts his people,
he redeems Jerusalem.

The LORD has bared his holy arm
in the sight of all the nations;
all the ends of the earth will behold
the salvation of our God.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

Zion = ZĪ-uhn or ZĪ-ahn

Sound exuberant during this reading.

With good volume. Smile.

Slowly proclaim as you build excitement in
your voice. Articulate the words.

Keep your energy up. Smile as you proclaim
with good eye contact and volume.

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

READING I Each of the three readings
for Christmas day an-
nounces the good news in poetic language.
Filled with imagery that appeals to the
senses, the biblical poems draw those who
hear them into the experience of wonder
and awe. In the first reading, signs of resto-
ration that can be seen and heard would
have been important for the exiles in
Babylon, who longed to see their home-

land. Along with the restoration of
Jerusalem is the restoration of hope for
despondent exiles.

In the beginning, center, and conclu-
sion of his poem, Isaiah presents hope-
filled sights. The first image, observed from
Jerusalem's heights, is that of a herald with
feet hurriedly running to bring the good
news. Like the words of a prophet, the
words of the herald are effective, for the
sentinels "see, directly, before their eyes"
the Lord restoring Zion. Not only do the
observers from the mountain see the her-
ald and signs of restoration, but also the

Lord's holy arm is bared in the sight of the
nations. The power of God's arm is reminis-
cent of the power that God displayed in
freeing the people from Egypt and bringing
them to their own land. Today's responso-
rial psalm echoes, "his right hand has won
victory for him, his holy arm." The people
can see God again acting for the sake of the
chosen people. So extensive is divine salva-
tion for Zion that all the ends of the earth
will behold it.

Interspersed between the visible sights
of the arrival of the good news are exuber-
ant sounds. The herald's announcement is

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 (3c)

R. All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
his right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise.

The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed
his justice.

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.

He has remembered his kindness and
his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.

READING II Hebrews 1:1-6

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

In times **past**, God spoke in partial and various ways
to our **ancestors** through the prophets;
in these **last days**, he has **spoken** to **us** through the Son,
whom **he** made **heir** of **all** things
and through whom **he** **created** the **universe**,
who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being,
and who **sustains** all things by his mighty **word**.
When he had **accomplished** purification from sins,
he **took** his seat at the right **hand** of the **Majesty** on **high**,
as far superior to the angels
as the **name** **he** has inherited is more **excellent** than **theirs**.

For to **which** of the angels did God **ever** say:

You are my son; this day I have begotten you!

Or again:

I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me!

And again, when he **leads** the firstborn into the world, he says:

Let all the angels of God worship him.

Pause. Use an informative tone.

Use strong eye contact.

Use strong eye contact.

refulgence = rih-FUHL-j*nts (radiance or
brilliance)

Energy needed. Pause before you ask God's
questions.

totally positive as he proclaims peace, salvation, and "Your God is King." Neither Babylon nor any other earthly empire rules over Zion, for the Lord is their King. As the sentinels themselves shout with joy when they hear the good news, we can easily imagine them using the psalms to express their joy. "The Lord is king; let the earth rejoice" (Psalm 97:1). Even the ruins of Jerusalem will join in singing. Sights and sounds together give witness to God's action; comfort, redemption, and salvation express a powerful and intimate relation-

ship of the Lord with Zion, past, present, and future.

READING II The letter to the Hebrews

opens with a hymn, probably sung in early liturgies, that ponders the mystery of Christ. Like Isaiah's prophecy, the poem is filled with auditory and visual imagery. God's own voice resounds from times past to these last days in which God has spoken through his Son. As varied and insistent as was God's voice in the past, the revelation was only partial. The prophet Isaiah's proclamation in the first reading was a semi-

nal revelation that announced the good news of peace, salvation, and the Lord's kingship. In unfolding the mystery of Jesus, the author will draw on the ancient and partial revelation and give it new meaning.

Because the spoken word was incomplete, God spoke in these last days in a visible and personal way through his own Son. Although the word spoken through God's Son is astonishingly new, there is continuity and resonance with God's partial word from the past. In particular, the portrait of God's Son bears striking resemblance to Wisdom personified. A mysterious figure of