

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS): VIGIL

LECTIONARY #13

READING I Isaiah 62:1-5

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

For **Zion's** sake I will **not** be **silent**,
for **Jerusalem's** sake I will **not** be **quiet**,
until her **vindication** shines forth like the **dawn**
and her **victory** like a burning **torch**.

Nations shall **behold** your **vindication**,
and all the **kings** your **glory**;
you shall be **called** by a new **name**
pronounced by the **mouth** of the **LORD**.
You shall be a **glorious crown** in the **hand** of the **LORD**,
a **royal diadem** held by your God.
No more shall people call you "**Forsaken**,"
or your land "**Desolate**,"
but you shall be called "**My Delight**,"
and your land "**Espoused**."
For the **LORD** **delights** in you
and makes your land his **spouse**.
As a young man marries a **virgin**,
your **Builder** shall **marry** you;
and as a **bridegroom** **rejoices** in his **bride**
so shall your God rejoice in **you**.

Isaiah = i-ZAY-uh

Notice the repetitions of the phrase "you shall." Pace your readings with each expression of "you shall" (or its variations) as a marker.

Notice the sound carried from "Zion's" to "silent" to "quiet."

Give extra emphasis to each of these four names.

Even emphasis on all the words in this last line, with extra added on "you."

There are options for today's readings. Contact your parish staff to learn which readings will be used.

READING I

The four weeks of Advent serve as a time of preparation for the great feast of the Lord's Nativity, the Christian celebration of the mystery of the incarnation. While much of our preparation has been meant to be "eschatological," in that we are patiently awaiting for Christ's return at the end time, thereby ushering in the completion of God's kingdom, the final portion of Advent allows

us to prepare with joy for the celebration of the birth of Jesus in history. The Masses that constitute Christmas Day, beginning with the Vigil on December 24 through the Mass at Night and continuing through the Mass at Dawn and the Mass during the Day, balance artfully the two themes of eschatological waiting and joyful celebration for God's manifestation in the baby Jesus.

The Vigil's first reading, from the latter part of Isaiah (often referred to as Third or Trito-Isaiah), opens with a sense of victory. The one who witnesses Jerusalem's renewal is incapable of being silent, but instead,

must proclaim in speech and in deed that she has been vindicated. Those who shall see the success of the nation are not simply its own citizens but peoples around the world. This restored creation will be a prized possession for God—"a glorious crown" and "a royal diadem." Unlike the stance of waiting for a future glory to appear, the words of Isaiah represent a form of "realized eschatology," whereby salvation takes place now. The Israelites do not have to look forward to the future for God to prove his allegiance; they are able to see their chosen status in the present evidence.

For meditation and context:

Antioch = AN-tee-ahk
Pisidia = pih-SID-ee-uhc

This reading sets up a prophetic succession, beginning with the Israelites in the desert and moving from David to John the Baptist, and finally to Jesus.

sojourn = SOH-jern (exile)

Though Paul is speaking in this reading, he is quoting the words of his predecessors. You can modulate your voice slightly to suggest this shift.

This is especially the case in the way in which the reading closes. Zion is portrayed as God's bride. Jerusalem is now to be called God's "Delight," for the land is his "Espoused." Such labels for Israel clearly express God's care and compassion for a people who have managed to stay faithful to him throughout the years of exile. The renewal of God's relationship with his people is so great that he approaches them "as a young man marries a virgin." In other words, Jerusalem is likened to a virginal state, without having been touched by another. Just as marriage is a sign of hope

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 89:4–5, 16–17, 27, 29 (2a)

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant:
Forever will I confirm your posterity
and establish your throne for
all generations.

He shall say of me, "You are my father,
my God, the rock, my savior."
Forever I will maintain my kindness
toward him,
and my covenant with him stands firm.

Blessed the people who know the
joyful shout;
in the light of your countenance, O LORD,
they walk.

At your name they rejoice all the day,
and through your justice they are exalted.

READING II Acts of the Apostles 13:16–17, 22–25

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When Paul reached Antioch in Pisidia and entered
the synagogue,

he stood up, motioned with his hand, and said,

"Fellow Israelites and you others who are God-fearing, listen.

The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors
and exalted the people during their sojourn in
the land of Egypt.

With **uplifted arm** he led them out of it.

Then he removed Saul and raised up David as king;
of him he testified,

'I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart;
he will carry out my every wish.'

From this man's descendants God, according to his promise,
has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus.

for many years of blessing to come, so too is the return of the people a sign of great hope that manifests itself in festal joy.

Our awaiting the perfection of God's kingdom as well as our celebration of God's incarnation in history ought to manifest the same hope and joy to every corner of the earth. As the Christian community gathers in prayer and vigil this night, the proclamation of God's victory ought to be welling up in every heart, preparing every member of the Church to proclaim from every mountain peak and every roof top that our God has come to save us.

READING II This reading opens with the continuing travels of Paul and Barnabas, who having just left Pamphylia have now arrived in the port of Antioch. As a major stop along a primary trade route, Antioch was a Roman colony with a significant population of Jewish citizens. Acts makes clear that Paul wastes no time, going immediately to the synagogue to share his message of Christ with the people.

Speaking to "fellow Israelites" and "God-fearing" Gentiles, Paul preaches with great poise and dexterity. His method is to trace the hand of God in significant histori-

Paul concludes with John the Baptist's memorable phrase about Jesus. A slight emphasis on "sandals" and "feet" will remind the assembly whose words these are.

A whopper of a reading. The first part of this reading is a performative, rhythmical incantation, one unusual name leading to the next. It goes from Abraham to David; from David to the Babylonian exile; from the Babylonian exile to Jesus. It's a folding screen with two hinges, each panel of the screen exactly the same size, and the image of Jesus' birth appears on its front.

Genealogy = jee-nee-OL-uh-jee
Abraham = AY-bruh-ham; Isaac = ī-zik
Judah = JOO-duh
Perez = PAYR-ez; Zerah = ZEE-rah

Only five women are included in this list.

Tamar = TAY-mahr
Hezron = HEZ-ruhn
Ram = ram
Amminadab = uh-MIN-uh-dab
Nahshon = NAH-shon
Salmon = SAL-muhn
Boaz = BOH-az
Rahab = RAY-hab
Obed = OH-bed
Jesse = JES-ee

John heralded his coming by proclaiming a **baptism of repentance** to **all** the people of Israel;
and as John was completing his course, he would say,
'What do you suppose that I **am**? I **am not he**.
Behold, one is coming **after me**;
I am not **worthy** to unfasten the **sandals** of his **feet**.'"

GOSPEL Matthew 1:1-25

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

The book of the **genealogy** of **Jesus Christ**,
the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham became the father of **Isaac**,
Isaac the father of **Jacob**,

Jacob the father of **Judah** and his **brothers**.
Judah became the father of **Perez** and **Zerah**,
whose mother was **Tamar**.

Perez became the father of **Hezron**,
Hezron the father of **Ram**,
Ram the father of **Amminadab**.

Amminadab became the father of **Nahshon**,
Nahshon the father of **Salmon**,
Salmon the father of **Boaz**,
whose mother was **Rahab**.

Boaz became the father of **Obed**,
whose mother was **Ruth**.

Obed became the father of **Jesse**,
Jesse the father of **David** the king. >>

cal events, demonstrating how God consistently acted to support and nurture his people. First, Paul announces that God chose the people of Israel through "our ancestors," with the moment of the exodus from Egypt as a primary example of God's demonstration of preferring Israel to every other nation on earth. Second, God proved himself providential in providing the right king at the right time for the people of Israel as he replaced Saul by his anointing of David. Finally, God has provided a savior for the people named Jesus, who has come to them through the lineage of David. Paul

leaves no doubt that God has consistently proven his desire to protect and care for his people.

The passage ends with Paul referring to the testimony of John the Baptist. He portrays the Baptist as a trustworthy prophet who had attracted the attention of "all the people of Israel." His authority was so great that many mistook him for the messiah. However, Paul repeats the familiar saying of John that he claimed himself too unworthy to unlace the messiah's sandals. What Paul has done in this fairly short exhortation is to make credible the word

that he preaches. First, he has witnessed to the fidelity of God who journeyed with his people and protected them always, and secondly, God has seen fit to send the redeemer into the world through the bloodline of his chosen people. What God promised in his covenant with Israel has now been revealed in the one who has come to bring true and lasting freedom. The people of Antioch have every reason to listen to the message of salvation Paul brings to them.

Uriah = yoo-RI-uh
 Rehoboam = ree-huh-BOH-uhm
 Abijah = uh-BI-juh
 Asaph = AY-saf
 Jehoshaphat = jeh-HOH-shuh-fat
 Joram = JOHR-uhm
 Uzziah = yuh-ZI-uh
 Jotham = JOH-thuhm
 Ahaz = AY-haz
 Hezekiah = hez-eh-KI-uh
 Manasseh = muh-NAS-uh
 Amos = AY-m*s
 Josiah = joh-SI-uh
 Jechoniah = jek-oh-NI-uh

Shealtiel = shee-AL-tee-uhl
 Zerubbabel = zuh-ROOB-uh-b*I
 Abiud = uh-BI-uhd
 Eliakim = ee-LI-uh-kim
 Azor = AY-sohr
 Zadok = ZAD-uhk
 Achim = AH-kim
 Eliud = ee-LI-uhd
 Eleazar = el-ee-AY-zer
 Matthan = MATH-uhh

David became the father of **Solomon**,
 whose **mother** had been the wife of **Uriah**.
Solomon became the father of **Rehoboam**,
Rehoboam the father of **Abijah**,
Abijah the father of **Asaph**.
Asaph became the father of **Jehoshaphat**,
Jehoshaphat the father of **Joram**,
Joram the father of **Uzziah**.
Uzziah became the father of **Jotham**,
Jotham the father of **Ahaz**,
Ahaz the father of **Hezekiah**.
Hezekiah became the father of **Manasseh**,
Manasseh the father of **Amos**,
Amos the father of **Josiah**.
Josiah became the father of **Jechoniah** and his **brothers**
 at the time of the **Babylonian exile**.

After the **Babylonian exile**,
Jechoniah became the father of **Shealtiel**,
Shealtiel the father of **Zerubbabel**,
Zerubbabel the father of **Abiud**.
Abiud became the father of **Eliakim**,
Eliakim the father of **Azor**,
Azor the father of **Zadok**.
Zadok became the father of **Achim**,
Achim the father of **Eliud**,
Eliud the father of **Eleazar**.
Eleazar became the father of **Matthan**,
Matthan the father of **Jacob**,
Jacob the father of **Joseph**, the husband of **Mary**.
 Of her was born **Jesus** who is called the **Christ**.

Thus the total number of **generations**
 from **Abraham** to **David**
 is **fourteen** generations;

GOSPEL

Similar to Paul's preaching in Acts, which traced the critical events of salvation history that led to the coming of the messiah, the genealogy at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel serves the function of substantiating the credibility of Jesus. The word *genealogy* comes from the root word *genesis*, which means the origins of someone or something. For example, the Book of Genesis contains the story of the origins of the world's foundation. Matthew opens his Gospel with the family tree of Jesus because he wants he readers to have no

doubt that Jesus is in keeping with God's plan of salvation. God acts within the established framework of history.

It is important to consider the context in which Matthew writes his Gospel. Biblical scholars tell us that the composition of this Gospel takes places shortly after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in AD 70. Matthew writes to a very Jewish audience who were faced with a very significant decision: How are we meant to keep the covenant with God now that the Temple and sacrificial worship are no more? Matthew has an

answer for them: Come to faith in Jesus, for he fulfills the covenant. No temple is required to follow after Jesus; instead, what is needed is faith in him through baptism and the keeping of his commands. Because Jesus fulfills the covenant, it is necessary that he be firmly positioned within Jewish history. For this reason, the story of Jesus' nativity is preceded by this lengthy genealogy.

Matthew 1:1-25 is not an easy reading to proclaim, and it is one that many presiders choose to replace with another of the Gospel passages from the other Christmas