

January 1st, 2012 First Sunday of Christmas

Introduction to the Day

In the psalm all the natural world praises God, including all humanity, male and female, young and old. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we speak of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.

After a moment of silent meditation to prepare ourselves for worship, we will begin the liturgy.

Prayers of the People

Rejoicing in this new year of grace, let us bring our prayers for the church, all creation, and the needs of the world before God.

A brief silence.

Let us pray for all the baptized, rejoicing in our adoption as children of God and, by the power of the Spirit, confessing the name of Jesus. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Let us pray for birds of the air, land animals, and sea creatures, that we may live in harmony with all of creation and join with it in praising God. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Let us pray for peace throughout the world, that we would not keep silent in the face of war, strife, and oppression, but work for reconciliation and healing at home and abroad. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Let us pray for all in need; for the sick, that they might experience your consolation; for the elderly, that they might live in dignity; and for the dying, that they might have peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Let us pray for the children of our congregation, that they will grow strong in their faith and be filled with the wisdom of Christ. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Let us give thanks for Anna, Simeon, and all the saints whose lives of worship and praise reveal to us the salvation and redemption of God through Christ. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Rejoicing in the glory of the Lord revealed to the world, we offer these and all our prayers to you, O God of our salvation.

Amen.

Lector: Please read the introduction, then the citation (i.e.. “The First Reading is from the.... chapter of ...” - then read the text.)

First Reading – *To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that the Lord’s salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.
For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm Psalm 148

Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise God in the heights.

**Praise the LORD, all you angels;
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**

Praise the LORD, sun and moon;
sing praise, all you shining stars.

**Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.**

Let them praise the name of the LORD,
who commanded, and they were created,
**who made them stand fast forever and ever,
giving them a law that shall not pass away.**

Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps;

**fire and hail, snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**

mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;

**wild beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds;**

sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the world;

**young men and maidens,
old and young together.**

Let them praise the name of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

**The LORD has raised up strength for the people
and praise for all faithful servants,
the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD.**

Hallelujah!

SECOND READING - *Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as sons and daughters.*

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL READING** - *Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.*

Luke 2:22–40

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee. When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too." There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty- four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.