

Readings + First Sunday of Christmas, year B + December 31, 2023

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

First Reading Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
and 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.

¹¹ 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.

⁶² ¹ For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until its vindication shines out like the dawn,
and its salvation like a burning torch.

² The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the rulers your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³ You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Psalmody 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 which 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 Galatians 4:4-7

Paul writes: ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent the Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Holy Gospel Luke 2:21-40

Like most of Luke's Christmas story, only Luke tells us these things.

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice

according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ 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. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” ³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ 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 ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶ 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, ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ 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.

³⁹ When Mary and Joseph had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.