

Reader's notes

*'IN THE SCRIPTURES,
BY THE SPIRIT,
MAY WE SEE THE SAVIOURS FACE,
HEAR HIS WORD AND
HEAD HIS CALLING,
KNOW HIS LOVE AND
GROW IN GRACE.'*

Last Sunday of Christmas

The three readings today are reflections and hymns on who this child is whose birth we celebrate.

The Gospel

John 1:1-18

"In the beginning was the Word..." The prologue of John's Gospel needs no introduction. We have heard it already on Christmas Day but it is repeated here on the opening Sunday of the calendar year. The Word in flesh, incarnate, now pitches his tent among us, searching for a place to rest, seeking to make us share that rest. Not a God out there or up there in excelsis, but right here, in profundis. God without loss of his majesty is intimately present with us.

The Psalm Response, a line from the Gospel, makes it absolutely clear what the theme of the readings is.

"The Word was made flesh"

First Reading

Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 24:1-2, 8-12

The relationship with the Gospel is clear. The author is reflecting lyrically on the connection between the remoteness and the intimacy of an eternally existing God. It is not yet a concept as radical as proposed by the Christian concept of the Incarnation, but the language is going way beyond a deist notion of an impersonal God, floating disinterestedly above creation. The author uses the idea of the eternally existing Wisdom of God to bridge the gap between strict monotheism and the presence of God in the world. The poetic language, *"Pitch your tent in Jacob"* etc. is pointing towards the personal and specific relationship between God and the world, articulated here as a relationship between the Wisdom (of God) personified and a specific people in a specific place.

Your Proclamation: This passage is majestic and demands a sonorous proclamation, if read flatly without suitable inflection it will fail to convey the sense of the text. At the same time it is lyrical, not

2nd Sunday of Christmas

Readings

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/readings/?feature=sunday>

Notes my own collection

funeral, so upbeat tones and joy, are appropriate.

Note that this is not a continuous passage, and the first 2 lines are 3rd person, while the remainder is 1st person. Try and capture the difference, perhaps by pausing, and changing to a lighter tone for the second, longer portion

Second Reading,

Ephesians 1:3-6,15-18

This reading offers us another opportunity within the Christmas season to reflect on what the birth of Jesus could mean for us today. While both parts of the reading do this, there is a special fervour in the second prayer. The air is invitational: come and see what the Lord has done...

Your Proclamation: This passage also has two clear sections, the first an almost spontaneous delight in the workings of God and the second a commentary on the evidence of that universal truth being lived out in the specific community to which Paul is writing. Try and capture the joy of the first part and, without being overly dramatic, address the second half to the community before you, let them hear in your tone, that you believe they deserve the same kind of praise

Next Readers Session: January 18th 11 am

For Information

The 18th January is the beginning of the Church Unity Week. Also the 26th January is Word of God Sunday (a new observation instituted by Pope Francis). It marks the Sunday from which the continuous reading of Matthew (Mark and Luke in years B & C) begins. It is appropriate that Matthew would be the special focus of your private reading of scripture this year.

To help there will be a special lecture on Matthew on the evening of Thursday 30th January, I would recommend this to all Readers as worth attending. See the Newsletter for details.

*The link to the readings is a temporary one, it will bring you to the correct readings **only** for the week leading up to the 5th. (its a copyright thing)*