

# Reader's notes

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

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## The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

### Readings

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

*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 Sunday in question. (its a copyright thing)*

**Notes:** <https://www.tarsus.ie/page-72/page-53/>

### The Gospel

LK 2:21-39

The audience of Luke's gospel were pagan converts. They were happy to become Christians but puzzled that they had inherited a religion that started among the famously exclusive Jews. So Luke shows them two representatives of the Jewish heritage proclaiming how that tradition was destined to be transformed by Jesus.

### First Reading,

Malachi 3:1-4

After Judah returned from its exile in Babylon, the people and their leaders did not quickly rise to great levels of virtue. An anonymous prophet, who took the name Malachi (pronounce it MAL uh ki, with a short a in the first syllable, and long i in the third; it's Hebrew for "my messenger"), upbraided them for several abuses, such as religious impiety, cheating and marriage to pagans. In these verses, his particular concern is the temple and its rituals. His prediction that the Lord will visit the temple connects the first reading with today's gospel. The "sons of Levi" are the hereditary clan of priests who have been neglecting their sacred duties.

**Proclaiming It:** Malachi was passionate, and his imagery is vivid: How will the Lord come to the temple? **Suddenly.** How will we work? **Like the refiner's fire or the fuller's lye.** (A fuller was a craftsman who cleansed and thickened cloth.) So bring out the vigor in these expressions. Also emphasise "to the temple" so that your listeners know the locus of the action.

### Second Reading,

Hebrews 2:14-18

This letter was for some Jews who had become Christian, and who were feeling nostalgic for some of the institutions of Judaism from which they were now cut off. The author's intent is to show them that they have in Jesus everything they used to have in Judaism, and more. So there are references to Jewish ideas and theological concepts that are strange to most of us today.

For example, evidently the addressees had believed that angels played important mediating roles between God and the faithful. Rather than simply dismiss this idea, the author spends chapters 1 and 2 of Hebrews explaining how Jesus, as the very son of God, is superior to the angels. To explain why Jesus had to suffer (and angels do not suffer), he says in chapter 2, verse 9, that Jesus was made for a little while lower than the angels, that he might "taste death" for the sake of all people.

Then he says that this share in our suffering made our leader in salvation (Jesus) perfect. And the author implies something he'll develop later, that Jesus replaces the priests of old Judaism, just like he does the angels. Without using the word "priest" yet, but rather using the verb "consecrate" (the work specific to priests), he says "those consecrated" (that is, us) and the one consecrating (Jesus) have the same Father. So we're Jesus' brothers and sisters, and all children of God.

All this sets things up for the small paragraph forming our reading.

- The "children" of verse 14 are the same children of the Father to whom Jesus consecrated us in verse 11.
- Then the author gives another justification for Jesus' death (still a scandal and an anomaly demanding explanation), namely the defeat of the devil and liberation of those enslaved by the devil.
- He revisits the angels theme again, this time somewhat dismissively.
- Then he specifically names Jesus as high priest, appointed to do the specific priestly task of expiating the sins of the people.
- Finally he reinforces the theme of our solidarity with him in the business of being tested (tempted).

**Proclaiming It:** Whew! There's a lot packed into a few dozen words. Before such a smörgåsbord of ideas, and absent any compelling link to the first reading or gospel, I'd choose one notion and try to emphasise it. My choice? Jesus' solidarity with us. "Jesus likewise **shared** in them [human blood and flesh]," **"he had to become like his brothers and sisters"**

**Next Readers Session: February 22<sup>nd</sup> 11 am**