

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

The shepherds went in haste,  
and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant  
lying in a manger.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

O God, who were pleased to give us  
the shining example of the Holy Family,  
graciously grant that we may imitate them  
in practising the virtues of family life and in  
the bonds of charity,  
and so, in the joy of your house,  
delight one day in eternal rewards.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Gen 15:1-6. 21:1-3

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram  
in a vision, "Have no fear, Abram, I am your  
shield; your reward will be very great."

"My Lord," Abram replied "what do you  
intend to give me? I go childless ..." Then  
Abram said, "See, you have given me no  
descendants; some man of my household  
will be my heir." And then this word of the  
Lord was spoken to him, "He shall not be  
your heir; your heir shall be one of your own  
flesh and blood." Then taking him outside he  
said, "Look up to heaven and count  
the stars if you can. Such will be your  
descendants" he told him. Abram put his  
faith in the Lord, who counted this as making  
him justified.

The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had  
said, and did what he had promised her. So  
Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham  
in his old age, at the time God had promised.  
Abraham named the son born to him Isaac,  
the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Ps 104

Response:

**He, the Lord, is our God.**

**He remembers his covenant for ever.**

1. Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name,  
make known his deeds among the  
peoples.  
O sing to him, sing his praise;

tell all his wonderful works! (R.)

2. Be proud of his holy name,  
let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice.  
Consider the Lord and his strength;  
constantly seek his face. (R.)
3. Remember the wonders he has done,  
his miracles, the judgements he spoke.  
O children of Abraham, his servant,  
O sons of the Jacob he chose. (R.)
4. He remembers his covenant for ever,  
his promise for a thousand generations,  
the covenant he made with Abraham,  
the oath he swore to Isaac. (R.)

**SECOND READING** Heb 11:8:11-12:17-19

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the  
call to set out for a country that was the  
inheritance given to him and his descendants,  
and that he set out without knowing where  
he was going.

It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite  
of being past the age, was made able to  
conceive, because she believed that he  
who had made the promise would be faithful  
to it. Because of this, there came from one  
man, and one who was already as good as  
dead himself, more descendants than could  
be counted, as many as the stars of heaven  
or the grains of sand on the seashore.

It was by faith that Abraham, when put  
to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered  
to sacrifice his only son even though the  
promises had been made to him and he had  
been told: It is through Isaac that your name  
will be carried on. He was confident that God  
had the power even to raise the dead; and so,  
figuratively speaking, he was given back  
Isaac from the dead.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

At various times in the past  
and in various different ways,  
God spoke to our ancestors through the  
prophets;  
but in our own time, the last days,  
he has spoken to us through his Son.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Lk 2:22-40

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to  
Luke.

>When the day came for them to be purified  
as laid down by the Law of Moses, the  
parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem  
to present him to the Lord – observing what  
stands written in the law of the Lord: Every  
first-born male must be consecrated to  
the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in  
accordance with what is said in the Law of  
the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two  
young pigeons. >Now in Jerusalem there was  
a man named Simeon. He was an upright  
and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's  
comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him.  
It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit  
that he would not see death until he had set  
eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by  
the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when  
the parents brought in the child Jesus to do  
for him what the Law required, <he took him  
into his arms and blessed God; and he said:  
"Now, Master, you can let your servant go  
in peace,

just as you promised;  
because my eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared for all the nations  
to see,  
a light to enlighten the pagans  
and the glory of your people Israel."  
As the child's father and mother stood there  
wondering at the things that were being said  
about him, >Simeon blessed them and said  
to Mary his mother, "You see this child: he  
is destined for the fall and for the rising of  
many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is  
rejected – and a sword will pierce your own  
soul too < – so that the secret thoughts of  
many may be laid bare."

There was a prophetess also, Anna, the  
daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.  
She was well on in years. Her days of  
girlhood over, she had been married for  
seven years before becoming a widow. She  
was now eighty-four years old and never  
left the Temple, serving God night and day  
with fasting and prayer. She came by just  
at that moment and began to praise God;  
and she spoke of the child to all who looked  
forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

>When they had done everything the Law of  
the Lord required, they went back to Galilee,  
to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the  
child grew to maturity, and he was filled with  
wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

The Gospel of the Lord.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

We offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of  
conciliation,  
humbly asking that,  
through the intercession of the Virgin Mother  
of God and Saint Joseph,  
you may establish our families firmly in your  
grace and your peace.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Our God has appeared on the earth, and  
lived among us.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Bring those you refresh with this heavenly  
Sacrament,  
most merciful Father,  
to imitate constantly the example of the Holy  
Family,  
so that, after the trials of this world,  
we may share their company for ever.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## A VISIT TO THE TEMPLE

(LUKE 2:22-40)



The atmosphere of Luke's two chapters about the circumstances of Jesus' birth is very much that of the world of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The evangelist emphasises that the Messiah grew up in a family and social setting steeped in the traditions of Israel. His "parents" and the elderly couple in today's gospel episode represent all that is best in the people, those who are open to the Spirit and to the word of God. Luke mentions five times "the Law of the Lord" which underlines their fidelity to the practice of their religion. The scene takes place at the very heart of Israel's religious focus, the Temple in Jerusalem.

Simeon is a prophet who indicates in his song that the mission of Jesus will provoke different reactions: those who encounter Jesus will have to decide whether to accept him and his message or not. Mary represents the people of Israel, and the sword which will pierce her soul represents the act of judgment or discernment which will accompany this encounter: it is the blade which will penetrate the deepest part of the person to see what she or he is made of, to discover the decision they have come to about Jesus and his message. It is out of those who welcome Jesus, like Simeon and Anna, that the new people of God will be composed.

Luke notes that the family returns to Nazareth and that the child grew up like any other, so the Son of God was a true human being. ■

### SAY

**Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.**  
(Traditional song)

### LEARN

The name Jesus (and its Hebrew form *Joshua*) means 'Yahweh saves' (or 'the Lord saves').

Luke often pairs a male and female character in his writing, for example Simeon and Anna.

The sword which will pierce Mary's soul is the sword of judgment, not of sorrow.

### DO

Look around at the other people at the Eucharist: consider how your presence can be a support to someone who is struggling – and they to you.



### REFLECT

Luke's infancy narrative has been called 'the Gospel in miniature': all the main themes which will appear in the story of Jesus and his ministry are stated here and developed later. One motif which emerges from today's readings is the division which Jesus will cause among his hearers. Not everyone by any means will react in a positive way and their hostility will lead to his death on the cross. Each person will have to decide for themselves whether they will accept Jesus or not. Those who welcome him will form the new People of God.

No one in the Gospel story is a disciple in isolation: even Peter is one of the circle of disciples. Although each disciple has a personal relationship with Jesus the Master, we are all members of a wider group, which we call the Church. Luke emphasises that the righteous characters in the story of Jesus are faithful members of Israel, deeply attached and devoted to the traditions of their people. The purpose of such practices is to bring them close to God and to deepen their commitment. We might remember that the definition of the Church today is 'the People of God'. The purpose of our celebrating the Eucharist together is not just to celebrate our faith (or simply to fulfil an obligation) but also to give support to our fellow parishioners. If someone is struggling, it can be an immense help and encouragement to see others turning up every week. ■