

## Christmas

Reading 1: Isaiah 9: 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13

Reading II: Titus 2: 11-14

Gospel: Luke 2: 1 - 14

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/122522-night.cfm>



The story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is one of the most familiar Christian stories. It is known by many non-Christians and has been presented in many ways and diverse forms throughout the centuries. It emphasizes the humanity of Jesus in being born like every human. It proclaims his vulnerability in being a baby. It manifests his commonness with us in being poor and dependent.

The narrative begins with Caesar who wants power over the whole world by ordering a census. This will give him the number of people who will pay taxes and what power he will have over them. It then shifts to a couple from a very small village who have no human power but whose actions will impact the whole world. Mary will bear the savior of the world and Joseph will name him and thus declare him to be part of the line of David.

This contrast between those trying to exercise power from a position of authority with the one who has all power but comes as a vulnerable and common baby and needs others to care for him teaches something fundamental about authority and power. While those who exercise human authority hold onto it tightly, God uses authority to draw others closer. Caesar, Quirinius, and Herod all use fear to maintain power. Jesus draws near to people, shares in their pain and suffering, and welcomes them into a relationship. Rather than using them for some purpose, Jesus makes a lasting connection that brings life.

Jesus shares in the poverty, not only economic poverty that is shown by being born in a stable and lying in a manger but the poverty of recognition and status. Those who give attention have nothing to offer him. They are shepherds who are some of the poorest of people in society and some of the most despised. Jesus finds recognition amongst them and all of the marginalized of society during his life and ministry. Jesus continued this connection throughout his ministry as he ate with tax collectors, healed the sick, talked with women, and forgave sinners.

The Christmas narrative presents a question to each believer: What is the good news that you desire? If it is fame, power, or authority, it will have its limits. If you are seeking communion with God and others, it will be lasting. The route to this communion will not be through power and control. It will be through surrender, sharing of self, and entering into the lives of others. Jesus entered our humanity so that we might share in the life of God.

The Isaiah reading declares that God has brought light and joy through the birth of a child. Many parents have experienced the joy and hope that comes with the birth of a child. The Child whom God will send will offer this to all the human family. This child, whom we identify as Jesus will bring forth the perfect set of relationships in the human family. It will be for all humans, bring forth everlasting peace, and establish justice for humanity.

In the Letter to Titus, the return of Jesus at the end of time is recalled. Through Christ's first coming, we were called to reject the old patterns of human behavior and live in the way that Jesus opened for us. In his accompanying people and surrendering to suffering and death, he gave an example of a life-giving life. We have the opportunity to give our lives in loving service to spouses, children, parents, neighbors, and the marginalized of society. The time

that we have is a time of preparation for his coming again. Our long-term vision is how can we live as Jesus did so that we will be ready for his appearance in glory.

### **Key themes:**

Incarnation

God-with-us

Sharing the Good News

Power and authority

### **Reflection Questions**

How do you experience God with you today?

How do you show in your words and deeds that God is with us each day?

What light has broken the darkness in your life?

How are you living like Jesus each day?

### **Prayer ideas**

For the Church: that Christ may be born in our hearts so that we may bring God's love and hope to all whom we encounter

For an outpouring of God's favor in our time: that a childlike spirit of wonder and awe may be rekindled in our hearts and that we may have an excitement about life and the gift of each day

For all who are new parents: that they may recognize the gift of God that they hold and faithfully nurture the gifts and talents that God has given their child

For a spirit of gratitude: that our minds and hearts may recognize and appreciate all that God has done for us

For the forgotten of society: that God will bring peace and hope to the marginalized, those in institutions, and the homeless and help them experience the length, depth, and breadth of God's love for them