

Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;

praise God in the heights.

<sup>2</sup>Praise the LORD, all you angels;

sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.

<sup>3</sup>Praise the LORD, sun and moon;

sing praise, all you shining stars.

<sup>4</sup>Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,

and you waters above the heavens.

<sup>5</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,

who commanded, and they were created,

<sup>6</sup>who made them stand fast forever and ever,

giving them a law that shall not pass away. **R**

<sup>7</sup>Praise the LORD from the earth,

you sea monsters and all deeps;

<sup>8</sup>fire and hail, snow and fog,

tempestuous wind, doing God's will;

<sup>9</sup>mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars;

<sup>10</sup>wild beasts and all cattle,

creeping things and flying birds;

<sup>11</sup>sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,

princes and all rulers of the world;

<sup>12</sup>young men and maidens,

old and young together. **R**

<sup>13</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,

whose name only is exalted,

whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

<sup>14</sup>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! **R**

## Second Reading

Galatians 4:4-7

*Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.*

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>4</sup> in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.<sup>5</sup> And because you are

children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

## Gospel

Luke 2:22-40

*Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.*

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.<sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"),<sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>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.<sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

<sup>27</sup>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,<sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation,<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> So that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanneel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.

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

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

Night and day, all creation praises you, O God. Strengthen your church across nations, denominations, and traditions. Fill us with wisdom and unify our proclamation of your forgiveness and mercy. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

All creation is holy to you, O God. You cause the earth to bring forth its shoots and gardens to spring up. Protect hibernating animals and frozen lands that wait earnestly for longer days of awakening and growth. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

The nations are upheld by your hand, O God. Cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, inspiring leaders to serve with compassion and integrity. Send your spirit of discernment upon legislators grappling with complex decisions for the sake of the common good. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **Tuesday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **Wednesday** 2 Peter 3:8-13. **Thursday** John 8:12-19. **Friday** (Name of Jesus) Numbers 6:22-27. **Saturday** (Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehle, renewer of the church, 1872) Psalm 148. **Second Sunday of Christmas** Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12; Psalm 147:12-20 or Wisdom 10:15-21; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:[1-9] 10-18.

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Tracks 1 and 2



Celebrate

First Sunday of Christmas  
 December 27, 2020

*The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.*

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 who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

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

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>62:1</sup>For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
 and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
 until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
 and her salvation like a burning torch.  
<sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your vindication,  
 and you shall be called by a new name  
 that the mouth of the LORD will give.  
<sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
 and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.