

SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year C

16 January 2022



Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
who govern all things,
both in heaven and on earth,
mercifully hear the pleading of your people
and bestow your peace on our times.
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.

Readings and Commentaries

The seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter all have names that identify them and evoke their distinctive character. It has to be confessed that “Ordinary Time” fails to do the same. Even the more accurate “Ordered Time” has no great appeal, but at least it offers a clue. In the course of the thirty-four weeks of the season, we read in an ordered way through the gospel account of Jesus’ public ministry. Guided this year by Luke, we accompany Jesus from his baptism through to his final discourse on the end of time. We witness his preaching, teaching, healing, praying and wayfaring. We see how he cares for the poor and lowly and how inclusive he is of women. We warm to his message of mercy but are taken aback at his demand for radical detachment from possessions and family. We are impressed by the centrality of prayer in his life, by his familiarity with the Spirit and by his determination to face the fate of prophets in Jerusalem.

Of our other companions in Ordinary Time, the prophets, wisdom writers and historians of the Old Testament come and go, but Paul the apostle, like Luke, is constantly by our side. We are amazed at the indefatigable energy with which he expounds the mystery of Christ, addresses divisive problems in his scattered communities and endures all kinds of hardship. In the end there’s nothing ordinary about “Ordinary Time”!

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

62:1–5

About Zion I will not be silent,
about Jerusalem I will not grow weary,
until her integrity shines out like the dawn
and her salvation flames like a torch.

The nations then will see your integrity,
all the kings your glory,
and you will be called by a new name,
one which the mouth of the Lord will confer.
You are to be a crown of splendour
in the hand of the Lord,
a princely diadem in the hand of your God;
no longer are you to be named 'Forsaken,'
nor your land 'Abandoned,'
but you shall be called 'My Delight'
and your land 'The Wedded';
for the Lord takes delight in you
and your land will have its wedding.

Like a young man marrying a virgin,
so will the one who built you wed you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride,
so will your God rejoice in you.

First Reading

Having set out on the "Year of Luke" last Sunday with the Baptism of the Lord, we may be surprised to find that today's gospel isn't from him. It's John's story of the wedding feast at Cana, once associated with the Epiphany. In view of the Cana gospel, a nuptial oracle from the prophet Isaiah has been chosen as the first reading. It also appears at the Christmas vigil Mass. The context for the reading is the exiles' return to Jerusalem from Babylon. They are now engaged in the arduous task of rebuilding the city. God addresses them with words of encouragement, offering them a vision of a glorious future. Jerusalem will be radiant with splendour for nations and kings to see. New names are promised for the city, no longer "Forsaken" or "Abandoned" but "My Delight" and "The Wedded." In the biblical tradition a new name meant a new destiny. These designations expand into an imagined wedding celebration of God's love for Israel.

The tone and language of the reading is poetic and effusive. It will take careful preparation for readers to do justice to its demonstrative spirit. As usual, readers have no opportunity to provide any prior explanation about the context, content or style of what they are about to read. But there are no problematic pronunciations and the reading is set out helpfully in short lines. They should be respected. This text is one to be proclaimed with joy, energy and authority.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 95:1–3, 7–10

R. Proclaim his marvellous deeds
to all the nations.

○ sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.

○ sing to the Lord, bless his name. **R.**

Proclaim his help day by day,
tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all the peoples. **R.**

Give the Lord, you families of peoples,
give the Lord glory and power,
give the Lord the glory of his name. **R.**

Worship the Lord in his temple.

○ earth, tremble before him.

Proclaim to the nations: 'God is king.'

He will judge the peoples in fairness. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

In the course of the year verses from Psalm 95/96 are used in a variety of different combinations for the responsorial psalm. Today the opening three verses and four from the middle of the psalm are yoked together in a harmonious ensemble. Altogether they reinforce the joyous spirit established by Isaiah.

The psalm acclaims the sovereignty of God over all the world. The God who has singled out the chosen people of Israel for covenant relationship, the God whose identity is intertwined with that of Israel, is declared to be the God of all peoples. The verses alternate between commanding Israel to announce the majesty of God to the nations and calling on the nations, and even the earth, to praise the glory and power of God.

As is the way with Hebrew poetry, key ideas are repeated or rephrased. What doesn't change is the jubilant spirit of the psalm. This is how readers should pray it through, with energy and enthusiasm. They must not allow themselves to lapse into a matter-of-fact tone of voice or to rush through the short lines. The language is simple and straightforward but readers will need to vary their tone of voice to alert the assembly to the extra line in the final verse.

**A reading from the first letter of St Paul
to the Corinthians 12:4–11**

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another again the gift of healing, through this one Spirit; one, the power of miracles; another, prophecy; another the gift of recognising spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses.

**A reading from the holy Gospel
according to John 2:1–11**

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. When they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the wedding was all finished, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said, 'Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' There were six stone water jars standing there, meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. 'Draw some out now,' he told them, 'and take it to the steward.' They did this; the steward tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from – only the servants who had drawn the water knew – the steward called the bridegroom and said, 'People generally serve the best wine first, and keep the cheaper sort till the guests have had plenty to drink; but you have kept the best wine till now.'

This was the first of the signs given by Jesus: it was given at Cana in Galilee. He let his glory be seen, and his disciples believed in him.

Second Reading

Paul's first letter to the Christians at Corinth is both long and important. It provides the second reading for the first weeks of Ordinary Time each year. In Year C there are seven readings from chapters 12-15.

The Corinthian community was vibrant, diverse and divided. Paul sets himself to both chastise and instruct its members. After addressing power struggles, issues of sexual morality and problems in eucharistic worship in the earlier chapters, he turns finally to deal with two other matters: spiritual gifts and the resurrection of the dead.

The Corinthians revelled in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. So many gifts were enjoyed by them that they became a cause of pride, ambition and competition. In today's passage Paul begins to mount his case. He lists an impressive array of charisms – preaching, healing, prophesying, to name but a few – in order to insist that it is one and same Spirit at work in them all. No matter how many and how diverse the gifts, they all stem from the one Spirit and are all "for a good purpose."

The reading paints a picture of an animated, dynamic and almost chaotic community in sharp contrast to the relatively passive and ordered parish communities of our time. Readers should take their time announcing Paul's list of gifts, even if proclaiming God's word is not named as one of them. This will give the assembly time to admire their variety and to wonder how gifts like these might be brought to light in today's Church.

Gospel

As mentioned earlier, echoes of Christmas and the Epiphany may be heard in the readings from Isaiah and the gospel of John. The story of the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee is unique to John but is only ever heard today in the Year of Luke. It doesn't appear among the readings from John that dominate the last weeks of Lent and the whole of Easter.

Luke, as we saw during Advent with his account of the visitation, is a master of the art of telling a human story with divine purpose. John takes this even further. The stories he tells – the wedding feast, the woman at the well, the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus – are about signs that are meant to provoke insight into Jesus' identity. The narratives have disconcerting twists and turns that confound our everyday logic, such as Jesus' seemingly disrespectful response to his mother at the wedding in Cana.

John is alerting us to the true import of Jesus' rescue of the embarrassed newlyweds. This sign is far more than an act of charity. It is a revelation of who Jesus is. The Cana story is a commentary on what John wrote in the prologue to his gospel: "though the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ." It prepares us for the epilogue, the full revelation of divine glory when Jesus is raised up to be again "nearest the Father's heart."

Concluding Blessing

May the Lord bless us and keep us.

Amen.

May he let his face shine upon us
and show us his mercy.

Amen.

May he turn his countenance towards us
and give us his peace.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time I, Roman Missal p 714)