

## FIRST READING

### **A Reading from the Book Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-7**

The word of God came to Abram in a vision. “Do not be afraid Abram! I am your shield, and your reward shall be great.” But Abram said, “O God, my God, what use are your gifts, seeing that I am childless?” Abram continued, “You have given me no heir, and so one of my servants will be my heir.” Then God’s word came in reply: “Such a one will not be your heir; no one but your very issue shall be your heir.” Then taking him outside, God said, “Look up to the heavens and count the stars in the sky, if you can. Thus will your descendants be.” Abram put faith in God who reckoned it to him as righteousness.

...

God showed favor to Sarah, as God had promised, and made good on the word spoken about her. She conceived; and, at the time foretold by God, she bore a child while Abraham was in his old age. The child whom Sarah bore was a son named Isaac. When Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded. Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. Sarah then said, “God has given me cause to laugh, and all who hear about this will laugh with me.” She added, “Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne a child in his old age.”

The Word of a Yahwist writer.

***Thanks be to God.***

**Readings for the Feast of Holy Family/ies, December 31, 2017**

**PSALM**

*Psalm 20 rendered by Merrill*

The psalm response is: Love triumphs over fear!

***R: Love triumphs over fear!***

May the Great Birther who created you in wholeness,  
comfort you when you call!

May the Name of Love be your protection  
and rise up in your heart as a tower of strength!

May all you have given in gratitude and with open hands  
be returned to you a hundredfold!

May your heart's desires and all of Love's plans for you  
be fulfilled in due season!

***R: Love triumphs over fear!***

Let us shout for joy as Love triumphs over fear;  
Let our thankful hearts sing in loud acclamation to the Beloved,  
who answers our heartfelt prayers for well-being.

Now I know that Love comes to all who open their hearts,  
And dwells therein, offering gifts of peace and harmony.

***R: Love triumphs over fear!***

Some may boast of wealth and personal power;  
they will stumble and fall.

Let us boast of the One who comes in the Name of Love;  
We shall rise up strong and sure.

***R: Love triumphs over fear!***

O Beloved, You who created us,  
You bless us with your Love,  
For you are the Divine Guest  
dwelling within our hearts.

***R: Love triumphs over fear!***

## **SECOND READING**

### **A Reading from the letter to the Hebrews 11:8, 11-12**

It was by faith that Abraham and Sarah followed the call to set out for a country that was to be the inheritance given to them and their descendants, and they set out without knowing where they were going.

It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that the One who made the promise was faithful. Because of this, there came from one couple, and one who already had the mark of death, descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore, descendants which cannot be counted.

The Word of an early church theologian.

***Thanks be to God.***

## **GOSPEL**

### **A Reading from the Gospel attributed to Luke 2:22-40**

After eight days had passed since Jesus' birth, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Then 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 God at the Temple (because, as it is written in the Law of God, "Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the Law of God, "a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was upright and devout, looking forward to the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had set eyes on God's Messiah. Prompted by the Spirit, Simeon came into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, Simeon took the babe in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Now, my God, you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your deliverance,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a revelation to the Gentiles  
and radiant glory to your people, Israel."

## **Readings for the Feast of Holy Family/ies, December 31, 2017**

As the child's mother and father were wondering at the things being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "This child is destined for the rise and fall of many in Israel, and destined to be a sign that is rejected, - so that the inner thoughts of many will be laid bare. And a sword will pierce your heart too."

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. She had only been married for seven years as a young woman, then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. She came up just at that moment, and began to praise God; and she spoke about the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When Mary and Joseph had satisfied everything required by the law of God, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Gospel of Our God.

***Praise to you, Jesus the Christ.***