

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

When a profound silence covered all things and night was in the middle of its course, your all-powerful Word, O Lord, bounded from heaven's royal throne.

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

Almighty ever-living God, splendour of faithful souls, graciously be pleased to fill the world with your glory, and show yourself to all peoples by the radiance of your light. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Ecc1 24:1-2, 8-12

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus
Wisdom speaks her own praises, in the midst of her people she glories in herself. She opens her mouth in the assembly of the Most High, she glories in herself in the presence of the Mighty One;
"Then the creator of all things instructed me, and he who created me fixed a place for my tent. He said, "Pitch your tent in Jacob, make Israel your inheritance."
From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, and for eternity I shall remain. I ministered before him in the holy tabernacle, and thus was I established on Zion. In the beloved city he has given me rest, and in Jerusalem I wield my authority. I have taken root in a privileged people in the Lord's property, in his inheritance."
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 147:12-15, 19-20

Response:
The Word was made flesh, and lived among us.

1. O praise the Lord, Jerusalem! Zion, praise your God! He has strengthened the bars of your gates, he has blessed the children within you. (R.)

2. He established peace on your borders, he feeds you with finest wheat. He sends out his word to the earth and swiftly runs his command. (R.)
3. He makes his word known to Jacob, to Israel his laws and decrees. He has not dealt thus with other nations; he has not taught them his decrees. (R.)

SECOND READING

Eph 1:3-6, 15-18

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians
Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ, for his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved.
That will explain why I, having once heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the love that you show towards all the saints, have never failed to remember you in my prayers and to thank God for you. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Glory be to you, O Christ, proclaimed to the pagans; Glory be to you, O Christ, believed in by the world. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 1:1-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Shorter form read between >< (1:1-5, 9-14)
>In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower. <
A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.
>The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him. But to all who did accept him

he gave power to become children of God, to all who believe in the name of him who was born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself. The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. <
John appears as his witness. He proclaims: "This is the one of whom I said: He who comes after me ranks before me because he existed before me." Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received – yes, grace in return for grace, since, though the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known.
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

Sanctify, O Lord, the offerings we make on the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son, for by it you show us the way of truth and promise the life of the heavenly Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

To all who would accept him, he gave the power to become children of God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord our God, we humbly ask you, that, through the working of this mystery, our offences may be cleansed and our just desires fulfilled. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOD'S PITCHED TENT

JOHN 1:1-18



The whole New Testament is really an attempt to answer the question Jesus put to his followers: "Who do you say I am?" But the Gospels are not biographies of Jesus. They don't tell his story from birth to death; rather, they are reflections on his significance in God's plan of salvation for the world.

Today's Gospel offers St John's wonderful account of who Jesus is. In this prelude to his Gospel, John outlines the bare bones of the story, which he will fill in as the narrative unfolds.

John's reflection springs from the very beginning of creation. Jesus is the Word of God, present with God before time began. Through him all things came to be, and he gives life to all that exists. He is God's only Son, through whom all of creation has the opportunity to share in God's life. He has pitched his tent in the midst of our world and begun his mission, announced by John the Baptist. Christ is the light that shines so brightly no darkness can overcome it. Some people have refused to recognise the light, and they languish in the darkness. But those who do hear the Word and respond to him will be called children of God.

As Christians, we are called to respond to God's word and to be God's voice and light in our world today through our lives and by our example. ■

DO

Light a candle as a reminder that Christ has come into your life.

SAY

"You, Lord, are the light of the world. Help me to place my trust in you."

LEARN

Actions reveal the true measure of our words

Jesus is the Word of God, the Word of life

We are called to speak God's word to others

PRAY

Pray that you will bring the mercy and compassion of God to all you meet.

REFLECT

MASH was one of my favourite TV shows growing up. The letters stand for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, and the show was about a U.S. MASH unit in Korea during the 1950s' war. It used humour to highlight the horror of war. The lead characters played the role of medics, and the operating theatre was a large canvas tent, a moveable field hospital. Through a combination of skill and humour, they sought to repair troops injured in battle.

Pope Francis likes to describe the church as a MASH unit. "I see the church as a field hospital after battle," he says. "It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if they have high cholesterol and about the level of their blood sugars. You have to heal their wounds. Then we can talk about everything else."

It's a beautiful image of church – as a MASH unit, a field hospital, where wounds are healed, hope restored, and mercy is abundant—the church as a big tent, offering respite and refuge to all.

Today's Gospel contains one of the most famous lines in all of Scripture: "The Word became flesh and lived among us." But the original Greek translation puts it like this: "The Word became flesh and pitched tent among us."

God pitched tent among us. God established a field hospital right here on earth. That pitched tent, that Word, John says, is Jesus.

The idea of God pitching tent among humanity draws on the richness of the Old Testament. Today's first reading from Ecclesiasticus tells us that the wisdom of God pitched her tent among the people of Israel. In the book of Ezekiel, God promises Israel: "My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

During Israel's wandering in the desert after their escape from Egypt, the tent was the place where God dwelt. God instructed Moses to put up a Tent of Meeting in the desert. This tent was a moveable, temporary, holy place where they could encounter God and was the forerunner of the great Temple of Jerusalem.

A tent has several advantages over a temple. A temple is a permanent structure; a tent is moveable. As the people made their slow trek to the Promised Land, they brought the tent with them, to be pitched wherever they set up camp. A symbol of God always in their midst.

We find the same image in today's Gospel. With the phrase 'pitched his tent,' St John captures how God journeys with God's people and is always available to them. Like the MASH unit that pitches tent wherever it's needed, God is available to us any time, anywhere.

Jesus is God's pitched tent, right here in our midst. We no longer have to think of God in the abstract, try to conjure what God is like. Jesus shows us what God is like. Jesus shows us the face of God.

The image of a pitched tent also reminds us of the fragile nature of the incarnation. A tent is a temporary dwelling place, delicate, vulnerable. In pitching tent among us, God takes on all our weaknesses and limitations. In Jesus, God knows what it means to hunger, thirst, be misunderstood, suffer a broken heart. God even knows what it's like to die. In Jesus, God has wholly embraced the human condition.

A pitched tent is a beautiful image of God-with-us. How should we respond to it? First, to always remember that God has pitched tent amongst us. This means we can turn to God at all times and in every situation – in our tears and laughter, happiness and despair, when all is well with the world and when it's not. This is the consoling truth our war-weary world badly needs to hear as we venture into another new year.

Second, it reminds us that we must become the kind of church Pope Francis wants: a field hospital. In other words, that, collectively and individually, we be Christ to others. In what we do, what we say, the compassion we display, the love we show – we are a sign of God's loving, healing presence in our world, a tangible, concrete sign of God's pitched tent.

You could say we are the Hawkeye Pierce's, the Margaret Houlihan's, the Fr Mulcahy's of the MASH unit that is the church. Like those timeless characters from that classic show, we must bind up wounds and offer comfort, healing, love and laughter to all we encounter along life's stony road. ■