

Second Sunday of Christmas

† Sunday, 2 January 2022



In England & Wales

Cycle of Prayer: Openness to the word of God

Keynote: The free gift of grace given by God

The Book of Sirach [Ecclesiasticus] 24: 1-2, 8-12

We have in this reading extracts from a great hymn of praise to Wisdom as personified: *'Wisdom speaks her own praises, in the midst of the people she glorifies in herself. She opens her mouth in the assembly of the Most High, she glories in herself in the presence of the Mighty One.'* The writer, Ben Sirach, will have understood that *Wisdom* was, like everything else, created by God, and that *Wisdom* was sent by God to dwell among his people: *'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, for all eternity I remain.'* Thus is the person *Wisdom*, sent to dwell with us and to comfort and instruct us in the ways of God. A personal sign of God's love, and the sign of God's indwelling grace bestowed upon us his own chosen people always with us forever.

Responsorial Psalm 147 (147) – In praise of God's personal care for his people

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 1: 3-6, 15-18

There is a certain reverence, a sense of awe in these words written by Paul: *'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.'* It is the sense of eternal destiny in the words that follow that impresses me: *'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...'* For it is in this deep sense that God has first loved us that our own response to God is born. Here, that we first begin to appreciate our true destiny, here it is that Paul's words of prayer take on a significance this very day: *'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.'* We can but stop, and like the disciples at the Transfiguration stare in wonderment and awe, *'for it is good for us to be here'*, and thus to contemplate the free gift of grace and favour bestowed upon us by God!

Gospel according to John 1: 1-18

This familiar opening passage from the Gospel according to John provides us with a theological reflection on the deeper meaning of the Christ event. Essentially, the Word of God, taking human flesh, and living among us. *'In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning... the Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory'*. In meeting Jesus through his human being, seeing him, hearing him speak, sharing with him the pains, suffering and joys of life, we discover the divinity of his being, in being in touch with him we learn something about ourselves and about our own destiny. *'He was in the world... he came to his own... to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God'*. What wonderful news this is, and a marvellous opportunity to transform our lives. It is worth repeating: *'to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God'*.

© Peter Harrison 2022

Liturgical Note – Solemnity of the Epiphany – Thursday, 6 January 2022 – Holiday of Obligation