

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre,
as Abraham sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.
Abraham looked up and saw three men standing near him.

Mamre = MAM-RAY

When he saw them,

he ran from the tent entrance to meet them,
and bowed down to the ground.

He said, “My lord, if I find favour with you,
do not pass by your servant.

Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet,
and rest yourselves under the tree.

Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves,
and after that you may pass on –
since you have come to your servant.”

So they said, “Do as you have said.”

And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said,
“Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour,
knead it, and make cakes.”

Abraham ran to the herd,

and took a calf, tender and good,

and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.

Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared,
and set it before them;

and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to Abraham,

“Where is your wife Sarah?”

And he said, “There, in the tent.”

Then one said,

“I will surely return to you in due season,
and your wife Sarah shall have a son.”

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake,
and in my flesh I am completing
what is lacking in Christ's afflictions
for the sake of his body, that is, the Church.

I became its servant
according to God's commission that was given to me for you,
to make the word of God fully known,
the mystery that has been hidden
throughout the ages and generations
but has now been revealed to his saints.

To them God chose to make known
how great among the Gentiles
are the riches of the glory of this mystery,
which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It is he whom we proclaim,
warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom,
so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – C 16

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Now as Jesus and his disciples went on their way,
he entered a certain village,
where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.
She had a sister named Mary,
who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.
But Martha was distracted by her many tasks;
so she came to Jesus and asked,
"Lord, do you not care
that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?
Tell her then to help me."
But the Lord answered her,
"Martha, Martha,
you are worried and distracted by many things;
there is need of only one thing.
Mary has chosen the better part,
which will not be taken away from her."



The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Genesis 18:1-10a

The annunciation of Isaac's birth to Abraham has no obvious connection with the thanksgiving for the Christian mystery in Colossians (second reading) or with Martha and Mary in Luke (Gospel).

Perhaps there is a thread linking the revelation of Isaac's birth to Abraham and the mystery hidden for ages and generations and now made manifest.

God is a God who acts in history, his actions are constantly new, and accompanying his actions is the revelation of their meaning. Action plus revelation of its meaning equals mystery.

Annunciation scenes are a device to disclose the meaning of God's acts in salvation history. The birth of a major figure in salvation history (often a birth out of due course, a supernatural birth) is announced by an angel.

The birth of Isaac was supernatural, because both Abraham and Sarah were too old to become parents. This and other similar birth stories (for example, Samson and Samuel) provide the Old Testament precedent for the annunciation of the birth of Jesus to Joseph in Matthew, and to Mary in Luke.

For Jesus' birth is likewise supernatural. In other words, Jesus is not merely a product of human history but an intervention, indeed the final eschatological intervention of God in salvation history.

The meaning of this history is disclosed to Joseph ("He will save his people from their sins") and to Mary ("He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High").

Responsorial Psalm: 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

This psalm is one of the "entry psalms" sung as the pilgrims entered the temple. It describes the character of the person whom God will accept as a worthy pilgrim—a person of justice, sincerity, and integrity.

Abraham was known for his justice, and this psalm serves as a fitting response to the First Reading.

Reading II: Colossians 1:24-28

The letter to the Colossians is one of the antilegomena that is, a letter regarded, at least by more radical critics, as deutero-Pauline. If that is so, the present passage is remarkably close to what St. Paul would have written, and is the product of a mind thoroughly im-

pregnated with the thoughts of the Apostle. It interprets the Apostle's self-understanding precisely as in Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans.

Suffering is one of the hallmarks of apostleship. The Apostle fills up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions—a bold formulation, which, however, does not mean that something is lacking in the atoning power of Christ's death.

The clue lies in the undoubted letters of Paul, which present his suffering as an epiphany, manifestation, or proclamation of Christ's cross. What is "lacking" is not the atoning power of the cross but its manifestation in the Church as a present reality.

As in the undoubted letters, Paul's gospel is a "mystery" (1 Cor 2:1), the proclamation of a new saving act, a complete novum unheard of before. For Paul, this mystery has a particular nuance (see Rom 11:25): it involves admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of the end-time community.

There are also some differences between our passage and the undoubted letters. In the latter, Paul does not speak of the Church as the body of Christ tout court but employs that image as a metaphor or simile to express the unity of the Church amid the diversity of its members.

Also, the undoubted letters either reject the notion that Christians already here in this time could be "mature" (*teleioi*, literally, "perfect") or use it ironically.

Colossians and Ephesians speak of perfection as a goal toward which Christians should progress on their earthly pilgrimage.

The differences are slight but significant.

The antilegomena presuppose a later situation in which it is recognized that the Church is here to stay, to live in history and to produce a Christian culture.

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42

This well-known idyllic scene is placed by Luke immediately after the parable of the Good Samaritan (see last Sunday). In this position it corrects the activist impression that might otherwise be deduced from Jesus' answer to the lawyer's question: "Do this, and you will live."

Activism must spring from hearing the word of God. Most of us would feel that we have to combine Mary and Martha—hearing the word of God and going out into the world in active service. But we must recognize that some have a primary vocation to be Mary, others to be Martha.

Reginald H. Fuller