

CHRISTMAS VIGIL
(Year A, B, C)

Citation: Isaiah, Chap. 62, Verses 1-5
Isaiah 62: 1-5

Isaiah is looking into the future despite the plight of captivity of his fellow-Israelites. He just "knows" God will fulfill his promise of salvation for Israel. The result will be like the joy of a newly married couple --- the wife secure and confident of protection and care by her husband; the husband so proud and pleased with the beauty of his bride. Let the joy really come out as you proclaim!

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

For Zion's sake I will not be silent, (very short pause)
for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, (build volume)
until her vindication shines forth like the dawn (very short pause)
and her victory like a burning torch. (short pause)

Nations shall behold your vindication, (convinced – throughout clause)
and all the kings your glory; (short pause)

you shall be called by a new name (great gladness!)
pronounced by the mouth of the LORD. (short pause)

You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the LORD, (how precious?)
a royal diadem held by your God. (short pause)

No more shall people call you (shift voice tone – entire sentence)
"Forsaken," (very short pause)
or your land
"Desolate," (very short pause)
but you shall be called
"My Delight," (very short pause)
and your land
"Espoused." (short pause)

For the LORD delights in you (proud; joyful)
and makes your land his spouse. (Pause)

As a young man marries a virgin, (more joy!)
your Builder shall marry you; (very short pause)
and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride
so shall your God rejoice in you. (firm, confident)

The word of the Lord.

CHRISTMAS VIGIL
(Year A, B, C)

Reading 2

Citation: Acts 13: 16-17, 22-25
Acts, Chap. 13, verses 16-17, 22-25

St Paul had come into Antioch to witness to his faith in Jesus and His Resurrection to his fellow-Jews. He begins his remarks in the synagogue by tracing salvation history of the Jews to Jesus. This passage ends with John the Baptist's declaration that he is merely announcing the imminent arrival of the Messiah. Paul is convinced, enthusiastic and determined to change the minds of his listeners. You be Paul!

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When Paul reached Antioch in Pisidia (narrating story introduction)
and entered the synagogue,
he stood up, (short pause)
motioned with his hand, (short pause)
and said, (short pause)

“Fellow Israelites (raise voice volume) (very short pause)
and you others who are God-fearing, (short pause)
listen. [exhorting] (short pause)

The God of this people Israel (“explaining” tone)
chose our ancestors and exalted the people (short pause)
during their sojourn in the land of Egypt.

With uplifted arm (very short pause)
he led them out of it. (short pause)
“Then (very short pause)
he removed Saul (short pause)
and raised up David as king; (Pause)
of him he testified, (short pause)
‘I have found David, [How does God sound?]
son of Jesse,
a man after my own heart; (short pause)
he will carry out my every wish.’ (Pause)

“From this man’s descendants [now, Paul has resumed speaking directly]
God, [parenthetical expression?]
according to his promise, (short pause)
has brought to Israel a savior, (short pause)
Jesus.

John heralded his coming (matter-of-factly)
by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; (very short pause)
and (very short pause)

Proclamation Format

as John was completing his course,
he would say,

‘What do you suppose that I am?

I am not he.

Behold,

one is coming after me;

I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.”

[parenthetical expression?]

(short pause)

(short pause)

[denial!] (very short pause)

(very short pause)

(very short pause)

(sincere humility)

The Word of the Lord.

CHRISTMAS VIGIL
(Year A, B, C)

Gospel
Longer Form

Citation: Matthew, Chap. 1, Verses 1-25
Matthew 1: 1-25

Your telling a story – the story of the lineage of our ancestors in Faith. There are 3 parts – the list, the summary, the birth of Jesus. The List is a long list. Use excitement or another form of word stress where famous names are mentioned. Vary your pace. Raise and lower your voice tone as it seems appropriate. The Summary is awesome – no “coincidence” intended for the 14 generations in each segment. The Narrative of the Birth of Jesus sets the stage for the rest of the Gospel – the story of God reaching out to humanity in a special way. Weave the awesomeness of ancient sayings with the excitement of the significance of the event for your listeners even in this day.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,
the son of David,
the son of Abraham.

(firm)
(firmer; almost triumph)

Abraham became the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.
Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah,
whose mother was Tamar.
Perez became the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
Ram the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab became the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
Salmon the father of Boaz,
whose mother was Rahab.
Boaz became the father of Obed,
whose mother was Ruth.
Obed became the father of Jesse,
Jesse the father of David the king.

[PART ONE]
(very short pause)
(parenthetical)
(very short pause)
(parenthetical)
(almost parenthetical)
(very short pause)
(short pause)

David became the father of Solomon,
whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.
Solomon became the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asaph.
Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Joram,
Joram the father of Uzziah.
Uzziah became the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.
Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh,

(vary voice tone these next lines)
"
"
"

Proclamation Format

Manasseh the father of Amos,
Amos the father of Josiah.
Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers
at the time of the Babylonian exile.
After the Babylonian exile,
Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel the father of Abiud.
Abiud became the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
Azor the father of Zadok.
Zadok became the father of Achim,
Achim the father of Eliud,
Eliud the father of Eleazar.
Eleazar became the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.
Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

(very serious, significant!)
(triumph?)

Thus the total number of generations
from Abraham to David is
fourteen generations;
from David to the Babylonian exile,
fourteen generations;
from the Babylonian exile to the Christ,
fourteen generations.

[PART TWO]
(rising voice of expectation) (very short pause)
(rising voice of expectation) (very short pause)
(very short pause)
(rising voice of expectation) (very short pause)
(voice goes down for emphasis)

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.

(short pause)

When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph,
but before they lived together,
she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.
Joseph her husband,
since he was a righteous man,
yet unwilling to expose her to shame,
decided to divorce her quietly.

(telling the story)
(parenthetical)
(assertion, but a bit matter-of-factly)
(almost parenthetical)
(kindly, gentle)
(very short pause)

Such was his intention when,
behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
"Joseph, son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.

(excited; urgency?)
(commanding tone)
“

For it is through the Holy Spirit
that this child has been conceived in her.
She will bear a son
and you are to name him Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."

(voice gradually down a bit)
(almost "WOW!")
(a command)
(short pause)

All this took place to fulfill
what the Lord had said through the prophet:

(you're explaining "why")
(very short pause)

Proclamation Format

Behold,
the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means
"God is with us."

(quoting from ancient scripture – some awe!)

When Joseph awoke,
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him
and took his wife into his home.
He had no relations with her until she bore a son,
and he named him
Jesus.

(triumphant tone)

(resume the narrative)

(very short pause)

(very short pause)

(strong but gentle)

The Gospel of the Lord.

CHRISTMAS VIGIL
(Year A, B, C)

GOSPEL
Shorter Form

Citation: Matthew, Chap. 1, Verses 18-25
Matthew 1: 18-25

Somewhat less drama, here, in this shorter form of the reading. You are the storyteller relating the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Take your time, though. The middle part – the angel's visit – is key since it explains why Joseph opted to disregard the "rules" of his community because of his faith in God. The last part builds in intensity and has a gradually slowing pace.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.

(very short pause)

When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph,
but before they lived together,
she was found with child
through the Holy Spirit.

(parenthetical)

(not quite parenthetical – an explanation)

Joseph
her husband,
since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame,
decided to divorce her quietly.

(somewhat parenthetical)
(disregard the 1st comma)
(matter-of-factly)

Such was his intention when,
behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
"Joseph, son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.
For it is through the Holy Spirit
that this child has been conceived in her.
She will bear a son
and you are to name him Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."

(surprise; quicker pace)
(commanding tone)
(very short pause)

(very short pause)

short pause)

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:
Behold,
the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means "God is with us."

(awe; conviction)

(very short pause)

When Joseph awoke,
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him
and took his wife into his home.
He had no relations with her until she bore a son,
and he named him
Jesus.

(voice gradually down to end)

(matter-of-factly)
(triumph)

The Gospel of the Lord.