

**Lectionary of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
in Simple English**

Year 3

CHRISTMAS PERIOD

Christmastime

Christmas Eve.

The promises are fulfilled.

Liturgical colour: white. If Christmas Eve coincides with the 4th Advent Sunday, purple or blue are used in the morning service.

Bible texts

Old Testament reading

Isaiah 11:1–5

¹ The family of Jesse is like a tree that has been cut down. A new tree will start to grow from it. And a branch will grow from the roots under the ground.

² The Spirit of the Lord will come and rest on him. The Spirit will give him wisdom to understand things. The Spirit will teach him what is right and give him the power to do it. The Spirit will help him to know the Lord and to show him respect.

³ He will be happy when he obeys the Lord. He will not judge people by the way things look. He will not decide by what he hears people say.

⁴ But he will be honest and fair when he judges the poor. He will give commands to punish bad people. When he speaks they will be killed.

⁵ He will wear justice like a belt round him. He will also wear faithfulness like clothes.

OR

Micah 5:2–5a

² ‘Bethlehem Ephrathah. You are only a little town among the many towns in Judah,’ God says.

‘But from you will come someone who will rule Israel for me. Long, long ago, I made plans for him to come.’

³ So God will turn away from his people and leave them. That will last until the woman who is expecting a child gives birth to her baby. This baby is the ruler that God has promised.

Then his brothers who are still alive will come back to Israel.

⁴ And this ruler will stay strong because the Lord will give him power.

He will be to his people like a shepherd taking care of his flock.

He will rule by the wonderful name of the Lord his God, and his people will live in safety.

Then the people all over the world will know that he is great.

⁵ And he will bring peace.

OR

Jeremiah 23:5–6

⁵ This is what the Lord says:

‘The time is coming, when I will raise up a good branch to the family of David.

He will rule as a wise king.

He will do what is fair and right in the country.

⁶ When he rules, Judah will be safe.

And Israel will live in safety.

His name will be:

“The Lord makes us right with him and saves us”.’

New Testament reading

Acts 13:16–26

¹⁶ Then Paul stood up. He raised his hand. Then he said to the people, ‘Men of Israel and you who worship the God of Israel! Listen to me!

¹⁷ The God of Israel chose our ancestors to be his people. While they lived in Egypt, God made his people great. Then God showed his power to them. He led them out from that country. ¹⁸ God was with them in the wilderness for 40 years. But the people did not obey him well. ¹⁹ God destroyed 7 nations who lived in the land named Canaan. God Took the land from these nations and gave it to his own people so that they could live there. ²⁰ All of these things took about 450 years to happen.

After this, God gave to his people judges. They were leaders over Israel until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹ Then the people of Israel asked to have a king. So God gave Saul to them as their king. Saul was the son of Kish and he was from the tribe of Benjamin. He ruled Israel for 40 years. ²² Then God removed Saul. He made David their king instead. God said this about David: “I have found David, the son of Jesse. He is the kind of man that my heart wants. I know that he will do everything that I want.”

²³ God has brought one man from the family of David to Israel. He is the Saviour Jesus. This is what God promised. ²⁴ Before Jesus came, John told to all the people of Israel what they should do. He told people to change their hearts and lives. He told them to stop doing wrong things and to turn to God. Then he would baptise them. ²⁵ When John was finishing his work, he said to the people, “Who do you think that I am? I am not the man that you are waiting for. That man will come soon. And I am not good enough even to untie his sandals for him.”

²⁶ Paul went on to speak: ‘Listen, brothers! I speak to all of you! Some of you are children of Abraham. Some of you are Gentiles. You do not belong to the people of Israel. But you worship the same God. God has sent this message to all of us. It tells us how he wants to save us.’

Gospel reading

Luke 2:1–14

¹ At that time, Caesar Augustus made a law. He sent it out to all the people in the Roman world. He wanted a list with the names of everyone on it. Everyone should be counted. ² This was the first time that the Romans counted all the people. Quirinius was governor of Syria when it happened.

³ Everyone went to their own town for the counting. ⁴ Joseph was living in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to Bethlehem in Judea. Bethlehem was called the town of David. Joseph belonged to the family of David. That is why he had to go to Bethlehem.

⁵ Joseph went there with Mary so that the Romans could count them. Mary was engaged to Joseph. And she was expecting a baby.

⁶ While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born. ⁷ This was her first baby, and it was a boy. She wrapped him up in cloths and put him in a box where animals are fed. She did this because the guest room was full.

⁸ That night some shepherds were staying out in the fields near Bethlehem. They were keeping watch over their sheep. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them. A bright light from God was shining all round them. That made them very afraid.

¹⁰ The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Listen! I bring you good news. This news will make everyone happy. ¹¹ Today your Saviour was born in the town of David. He is the Messiah. He is the Lord. ¹² This is how you will know this baby when you see him. You will find him wrapped in pieces of cloth. He is lying in a feeding box for animals.'

¹³ Suddenly a great army of angels came where the first angel was. They were praising God. They said:

¹⁴ 'Give praise to God who lives in the highest heaven!
He will give peace to the people who please him.'

Christmas Night.

To you a Saviour is born!

Liturgical colour: white

Bible texts

Old Testament reading

Isaiah 9:2–7

² The people live in the darkness. But they will see a great light. They live in a land that is as dark as death. But the light will shine on them.

³ Lord, you will make our nation grow. You will make its people happier. They will be happy when you are with them just as people are happy at the harvest. They will be happy just as soldiers are happy when they share the things they have taken in a battle.

⁴ That is because you do what you did in the fight with Midian. You will break the heavy yoke that the enemies have put on them. You will break the heavy pole from their backs. And you will break the stick that the enemy used to beat them.

⁵ They will burn every boot that the men used in the battle. They will throw into the fire every uniform with blood on it that they were wearing.

⁶ This will happen because a child is born for us. God has given a son to us. And that son will always have authority to lead his people. And they will call him by these names: Wonderful Advisor, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority will grow all the time. And the peace that he will bring will never end. He will sit on the throne of David and he will rule over his kingdom. He will make it safe. He will rule as a just and fair king. The Lord Almighty will make those things happen because he loves his people.

New Testament reading

Titus 2:11–14

¹¹ Now the grace of God has come. That grace can save everyone. ¹² It teaches us not to live against God anymore. We must turn away from the bad things that belong to this world. It also teaches us to keep control of ourselves while we live in this world. We must do what is right and what serves God.

¹³ We are waiting for Jesus Christ to come back to this world. He is our great hope. Everyone will see how great Jesus Christ is. He is our God and our Saviour. ¹⁴ He gave

himself for us. He made us free from all evil. He died to make us clean. This way we can be his own people. And we will always want to do good.

Gospel reading

Luke 2:1–14

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³ Everyone went to their own town for the counting. ⁴ Joseph was living in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to Bethlehem in Judea. Bethlehem was called the town of David. Joseph belonged to the family of David. That is why he had to go to Bethlehem.

⁵ Joseph went there with Mary so that the Romans could count them. Mary was engaged to Joseph. And she was expecting a baby.

⁶ While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born. ⁷ This was her first baby, and it was a boy. She wrapped him up in cloths and put him in a box where animals are fed. She did this because the guest room was full.

⁸ That night some shepherds were staying out in the fields near Bethlehem. They were keeping watch over their sheep. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them. A bright light from God was shining all round them. That made them very afraid.

¹⁰ The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Listen! I bring you good news. This news will make everyone happy. ¹¹ Today your Saviour was born in the town of David. He is the Messiah. He is the Lord. ¹² This is how you will know this baby when you see him. You will find him wrapped in pieces of cloth. He is lying in a feeding box for animals.'

¹³ Suddenly a great army of angels came where the first angel was. They were praising God. They said:

¹⁴ 'Give praise to God who lives in the highest heaven!
He will give peace to the people who please him.'

Christmas Morning.

Let us go to Bethlehem!

Liturgical colour: white

Bible texts

Old Testament reading

Isaiah 9:2–7

² The people live in the darkness. But they will see a great light. They live in a land that is as dark as death. But the light will shine on them.

³ Lord, you will make our nation grow. You will make its people happier. They will be happy when you are with them just as people are happy at the harvest. They will be happy just as soldiers are happy when they share the things they have taken in a battle.

⁴ That is because you do what you did in the fight with Midian. You will break the heavy yoke that the enemies have put on them. You will break the heavy pole from their backs. And you will break the stick that the enemy used to beat them.

⁵ They will burn every boot that the men used in the battle. They will throw into the fire every uniform with blood on it that they were wearing.

⁶ This will happen because a child is born for us. God has given a son to us. And that son will always have authority to lead his people. And they will call him by these names: Wonderful Advisor, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority will grow all the time. And the peace that he will bring will never end. He will sit on the throne of David and he will rule over his kingdom. He will make it safe. He will rule as a just and fair king. The Lord Almighty will make those things happen because he loves his people.

New Testament reading

Hebrews 1:1–6

¹ Many years ago, God spoke to our people through his prophets. He spoke to them many times and in many different ways. ² But in these last days, he has spoken to us again through his Son. God made the whole world and everything that there is. He did that through his Son. And he has chosen to give all things to his Son. ³ The Son shines with the bright light of God. He is completely like God. Therefore he shows us what God is like. His powerful word holds all things together. He made it possible for us to be completely clean from our sins. After that, he went back to heaven. There, he sat down at the right side of God, the great King in heaven.

⁴ So the Son of God became much greater than the angels. God gave him a name that is much greater than that of the angels. ⁵ God never said this to any angel:

‘You are my Son.
Today I have become your Father.’

God also never said about an angel:

‘I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son.’

⁶ Also, when God brings his firstborn Son into the world, he says:

‘All the angels of God must worship him.’

OR

Romans 1:(1) 2–4

(¹ I, Paul, write this letter. I am a servant of Christ Jesus. God chose me to be an apostle. He chose me to tell his good news everywhere.)

² God promised this good news long ago. His prophets wrote about it in the Bible. ^{3–4} This good news is about the Son of God, who is Jesus Christ, our Lord. Jesus was born as a human baby from the family of King David. But after his death, Jesus was raised up and made alive again. In this way, the Holy Spirit showed clearly that Jesus was the powerful Son of God.

Gospel reading

Luke 2:1–20

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⁵ Joseph went there with Mary so that the Romans could count them. Mary was engaged to Joseph. And she was expecting a baby.

⁶ While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born. ⁷ This was her first baby, and it was a boy. She wrapped him up in cloths and put him in a box where animals are fed. She did this because the guest room was full.

⁸ That night some shepherds were staying out in the fields near Bethlehem. They were keeping watch over their sheep. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them. A bright light from God was shining all round them. That made them very afraid.

¹⁰ The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Listen! I bring you good news. This news will make everyone happy. ¹¹ Today your Saviour was born in the town of David. He is

the Messiah. He is the Lord. ¹² This is how you will know this baby when you see him. You will find him wrapped in pieces of cloth. He is lying in a feeding box for animals.'

¹³ Suddenly a great army of angels came where the first angel was. They were praising God. They said:

¹⁴ 'Give praise to God who lives in the highest heaven!
He will give peace to the people who please him.'

¹⁵ After this, the angels left and went back to heaven. Then the shepherds said to each other, 'Let's go to Bethlehem! The Lord told us about what has happened there. Let's go and see for ourselves!'

¹⁶ So they went in a hurry to Bethlehem. When they got there, they found Mary and Joseph with the baby. The baby was lying in a feeding box. ¹⁷ After they had seen the baby, they told everybody what the angel had said to them about the child. ¹⁸ Everyone was very surprised at what the shepherds said. ¹⁹ Mary remembered everything that the shepherds had said. She kept their words in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds then went back to their sheep. They were praising God, saying how great he is. They were thanking him for everything that they had seen and heard. Everything that the angel had told was true!

Christmas Day.

The Word became flesh.

Liturgical colour: white

Bible texts

Old Testament reading

Isaiah 52:7–10

⁷ It is beautiful to see people coming down the mountains with good news. It is wonderful to hear them say that there is peace. They say that the danger is over, and the people will be safe. They say to Zion, 'Your God rules as king!'

⁸ Listen! The men who watch over the city are shouting. They are so happy that they are all shouting together. When the Lord comes back to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.

⁹ The enemy destroyed Jerusalem. But now the city will sing happy songs again. Be happy because the Lord has comforted his people. He has set Jerusalem free.

¹⁰ The Lord has made his holy arm bare. All the nations can see it. And all parts of the earth can see that God saves his people.

New Testament reading

1 John 1:1–4

¹ We have an important message to tell you. It is about a special person. He was there already before the beginning of the world. We heard him speak. We saw him with our own eyes. We watched him and we touched him. He is the Word that gives life.

² The one who is life showed himself. we saw it and are now telling what we saw. We tell you about the life without end. it was with the Father and now showed himself to us. ³ We want you also to share in this new life with us. And we share the life with God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son. That is why we are telling you what we have seen and heard. ⁴ We are writing these things to you so that together we all may be full of happiness.

OR

1 John 4:9–16a

⁹ This is how God showed that he loves us: He sent his only Son to the world. God gives us life through him. ¹⁰ This is what real love is. It is not that we have loved God. It is that he loved us. So he sent his Son to take away our sins. He died in our place.

¹¹ Dear friends, God loved us so much. So then, we should also love one another.

¹² Nobody has ever seen God. But, if we love each other, God lives in us. Then the love of God has become perfect in us.

¹³ God has given us his Holy Spirit to live in us. This is how we know that we live in God and that God lives in us. ¹⁴ God the Father sent his Son into the world to save it. We apostles have seen that it is true, and now we are telling people about it.

¹⁵ God lives in those who say, 'I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.' And they also live in God. ¹⁶ In this way, we really know the love that God has for us. And we trust on his love.

Gospel reading

John 1:1–14

¹ In the beginning, the Word was already there. The Word was with God. The Word was God. ² He was with God from the beginning. ³ God made all things through the Word. God did not make anything without him. ⁴ In him there was life. And that life was a light that shines to all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot put out the light.

⁶ There was a man named John. God sent him to bring his message. ⁷ He came to tell people about the light. He was a witness. God wanted everyone to believe in the light.

⁸ John himself was not that light. He only came to tell people about the light. ⁹ The true light was coming into the world. It is that light that gives light to every person.

¹⁰ The Word was in the world. God had made the world through him. But the world did not know who he was. ¹¹ He came to the world that was his own. But his own people did not accept him. ¹² Some people did accept him. They did believe in his name. So he gave them the right to become the children of God. ¹³ They did not become children of God the way babies are usually born. People did not decide that it would happen. It was not the will of a human father. No! They were born from God.

¹⁴ The Word became a man. He lived among us. We saw how great he is. He has a greatness that only the one true Son of the Father can have. He is full of kindness and truth.

Stephen's Day (2nd Christmas Day).

The witnesses of Christ

Liturgical colour: red

Bible texts

Old Testament reading

Jeremiah 15:15–20

¹⁵ You understand my problems, Lord.
Remember me and take care of me.
Punish the people who try to harm me.
You are patient. Do not take my life away from me.
Remember me.

Think of how much shame I suffer because of you.

¹⁶ Your words came to me and I ate them.

They made me very happy.

I was happy to be called by your name.

You are the Lord God Almighty.

¹⁷ I never sat with people that were laughing and having fun.

I sat alone, because your hand touched me.

You had made me very angry at the bad things around me.

¹⁸ Why is there no end to my pain?

Why is it that my wounds do not heal?

You are to me like a stream that goes dry.

You are like a spring without water.

¹⁹ So the Lord spoke to me.

'Change your heart and come back to me. Then I will take you back.

Then you can serve me again.

Speak important words and not useless words.

Then you can speak for me.

These people will turn to you,

but you must not become like them.

²⁰ I will make you like a wall to this people.

You will be as strong as a wall of bronze.

They will fight against you,

but they will not win the fight.

This is because I am with you.

I will help you and save you,' says the Lord.

New Testament reading

Acts 6:8, 11–15, 7:51–60

⁸ God blessed Stephen with kindness and power. He did many miracles and signs among the people.

¹¹ Then the Jewish leaders paid money to some men. They told them to say, 'We heard Stephen say bad things against Moses and against God.'

¹² In this way, they made the people angry against Stephen. The older Jewish leaders and the teachers of the Law of God also became very angry. So they grabbed Stephen. They took him to stand in front of the meeting of Jewish leaders. ¹³ Then they brought in some men to tell evil lies about Stephen. They said about Stephen, 'This man is always saying bad things about this holy place. He says bad things against the Law of God. ¹⁴ We also heard him talk about Jesus from Nazareth. He said that Jesus will destroy this place. He also said that Jesus will change the things that Moses told us to do.'

¹⁵ All the Jewish leaders in the meeting watched Stephen carefully. They saw that his face was like the face of an angel. — —

^{7:51} Then Stephen said, 'You stubborn Jewish leaders! You have not given your hearts to God. You do not want to listen to him. You are just like your ancestors. You always fight against the Holy Spirit. ⁵² Your ancestors tried to hurt every prophet that ever lived. They even killed the prophets that told them that God would send the Blameless Man. And now you have turned against that Blameless Man. You have given him over to his enemies to kill him. ⁵³ You are the people who received the Law of God. He gave it to you through his angels. But you have not obeyed it.'

⁵⁴ The Jewish leaders listened to Stephen. What he said made them very angry. They bit their teeth together because they were so angry at him. ⁵⁵ But the Holy Spirit filled Stephen. He looked up to heaven and he saw the glory of God. He also saw Jesus, who was standing at the right side of God. ⁵⁶ 'Look!' Stephen said. 'I can see heaven open! I can see the Son of Man and he is standing at the right side of God!'

⁵⁷ When the Jewish leaders heard this, they put their hands over their ears. Then they shouted very loudly at Stephen and they all ran at him. ⁵⁸ They took Stephen and they pulled him out of the city. They took off their coats. They left them to a young man to watch over them. This young man was called Saul. Then they began to throw stones at Stephen to kill him.

⁵⁹ While the men were throwing stones at him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' ⁶⁰ Then he fell down on his knees. He shouted, 'Lord, please do not punish these men because they are doing this to me.' After Stephen said this, he died.

Gospel reading

Matthew 23:34–39

[Jesus said to the teachers of the Law of God and to the Pharisees]

³⁴ ‘Listen to this. I will send prophets to you. I will also send to you wise people and teachers. But you will kill some of these people. You will hang some of them on a cross. In your prayer houses, you will beat some of them with whips. They will run from one town to another town, but you will follow them. ³⁵ Because of all this, God will punish you for all the good people that have been killed on the earth. Abel was the first of those good people. Then you also killed Zechariah, the son of Berekiah. He died between the Temple and the altar. ³⁶ Believe me, when I tell you this. God will punish the people who are alive today for all those murders.

³⁷ Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Your people kill the prophets of God. They throw stones to kill other people that God has sent to you. Many times, I have wanted to bring all of your people near to me. A mother bird covers her babies with her wings to make them safe. But you would not let me do that to you. ³⁸ So listen! Your house will be empty with nobody left. ³⁹ And I tell you this. You will not see me again until the day when you say, “God blesses the one who comes in the name of the Lord God.”

Apostle John's Day (3rd Christmas Day).

God is love.

Liturgical colour: white

Bible texts

Old Testament reading

Proverbs 8:1, 22–30

¹ Listen. Wisdom is like a woman calling out to you.

Understanding is calling out with a loud voice.

²² A long time ago, the Lord made me. He made me before he created anything.

²³ The Lord formed me in the beginning, before the world began.

²⁴ I was born before there were any seas. There were no springs full of water.

²⁵ I was born before the mountains were put in their places. I was born before there were any hills.

²⁶ I was born before God created the earth and its fields. There was not even dust on the earth.

²⁷ I was there when he made the heavens. I was there when he marked out the place where the sky meets the sea.

²⁸ I was there when he put the clouds in the sky. I was there when he opened the streams of waters in the sea.

²⁹ He told the waters how high they could rise. There were not allowed to go higher than that. I was there when he put the pillars of the earth in their place.

³⁰ I was by his side all the time. Like a child, I was full of happiness every day. I was happy to be with him.

New Testament reading

1 John 2:28 – 3:3

²⁸ Yes, my dear children, continue to in Christ. Then we can be bold when he comes back to this world. We will not feel ashamed or afraid to meet him.

²⁹ You know that Christ only does what is right. So you know this also: Everyone who does what is right is a child of God.

^{3:1} Look at how much God the Father loves us. He even calls us his children. And we really are his children now. The people who belong to this world do not know who God is. Because of that, they do not understand who we are. ² Dear friends, we are already children of God. God has not shown us what we will become in the future. But we do know this: When Christ comes back to this world, we will become like him. And

we will see him as he really is. ³ Christ is completely pure. So all of us who hope to see him then must keep ourselves pure from sin.

Gospel reading

John 21:19–24

¹⁹ Jesus said to Peter, 'Follow me.'

²⁰ Peter turned round and he saw the disciple that Jesus loved. (He was the one who had been very near to Jesus at the supper. He had asked Jesus, 'Lord, who is going to hand you over to your enemies?') Now this disciple was following behind them. ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, 'Lord, what will happen to him?' ²² Jesus answered him, 'Perhaps I want him to still be alive until I come back to this earth. But that should not matter to you.'

²³ Later on, the followers of Jesus began to talk about these words. Some thought that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say, 'He will not die.' Instead, he said to Peter, 'Perhaps I want him to still be alive until I come back to this earth. But that should not matter to you.'

²⁴ I am the disciple who saw these things. I am the one who wrote them down. We all know that what I have written about them is true.

Innocents' Day (4th Christmas Day).

Jesus, the refugee

Liturgical colour: white or red

Bible texts

Old Testament reading

Exodus 1:22 – 2:10

²² Pharaoh spoke to all the Egyptian people. He said, 'When a Hebrew boy is born, you must throw him in the river Nile. But you can let the baby girls live.'

^{2:1} At this time, there was a man who belonged to the family of Levi. He married a woman who was also from the family of Levi. ² The woman became pregnant and she gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a beautiful boy. So she hid him for three months. ³ Then she could no longer hide him. So after three months, she took a basket that was made of reeds. She covered the basket with tar to keep the water out of it. Then she put the baby in the basket. She put the basket at the edge of the river. She hid it among the tall grass.

⁴ The baby's sister stood not very far away. She wanted to see what would happen to the baby.

⁵ Then, the daughter of Pharaoh came to the river to take a bath. Her servant girls were walking near the edge of the river. Then she saw the basket among the tall grass. So she sent one of her servant girls to get it for her. ⁶ She opened the basket and saw the baby boy. He was crying. She felt sorry for him and she said, 'This is one of the Hebrew babies.'

⁷ Then the sister of the baby said to the daughter of Pharaoh, 'Do you want me to fetch a Hebrew woman? She can nurse the baby for you.' ⁸ She answered, 'Yes, please.'

So the girl went and she brought the baby's own mother. ⁹ The daughter of Pharaoh said to the baby's mother, 'Please take this baby to your house. You can nurse him for me. I will pay you for it.' So the woman took the baby home and she nursed him.

¹⁰ When the baby was older, his mother took him to the daughter of Pharaoh. He then became her son. She gave him the name 'Moses'. She said, 'I will call him Moses because I pulled him out of the water.'

New Testament reading

1 Peter 4:12–16

¹² Dear friends, I know that you are suffering painful things. They are like a burning fire. But do not be surprised about that. These things are happening to you, to test whether you really trust God. So do not think that something strange is happening to you. ¹³ Instead, be happy when you have trouble. Remember that Christ also suffered much pain. If you have trouble like he did, then you will be full of happiness when he comes back. Then everyone will see how great Christ really is. ¹⁴ People may say bad things against you because you belong to Christ. That is really a blessing from God. It shows that the Spirit of God is with you. He shows the glory of God.

¹⁵ You may suffer. But let it not be because you kill or you steal or you break the law or you make trouble for other people. ¹⁶ But if you suffer because you are a Christian, do not be ashamed about that. Instead, you should thank God that you are called 'Christian'.

Gospel reading

Matthew 2:13–21

¹³ The wise men went back to their own country. Then Joseph saw an angel of the Lord in his dream. The angel said to him, "Get up! Take the child and his mother. Take them to Egypt to be safe. Stay there until I tell you to come back. Herod will look for the child. He wants to kill him."

¹⁴ So Joseph got up. He took the child and his mother with him. They went to Egypt at once. ¹⁵ Joseph stayed in Egypt until Herod died. This way, the word of the Lord was fulfilled. The Lord had said through his prophet, "I have called my son to come out of Egypt."

¹⁶ Herod saw that the wise men had fooled him. He was very angry. So he sent his men to Bethlehem. He told them, "Kill all the baby boys living in Bethlehem and in the area around Bethlehem. Kill all the boys who are two years old or younger than that." The wise men had told Herod when they had first seen the special star. So he knew how old the child could be. ¹⁷ In this way, the words from the prophet Jeremiah became true. He had said:

¹⁸ "You can hear a sound in Ramah.
It is the sound of bitter crying and great sadness.
It is Rachel. She is crying for her children.
She doesn't let anyone comfort her,
because her children are dead."

¹⁹ After Herod died, Joseph had a dream in Egypt. He saw an angel of the Lord. ²⁰ The angel said to him, "Get up! Take the child and his mother. Go back to the land of Israel. The people who tried to kill the child are dead."

²¹ So Joseph got up. He took the child and his mother and they went back to Israel.