



THE LORD'S DAY AT HOME

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B)
Sunday 20th December 2020

If you are housebound or self-isolating at this time, please use these prayers to unite yourself with the worship of the Universal Church, and your own Parish this Sunday. If alone, read or say these prayers quietly to yourself. If with another, or in a family, someone should read the "leader" parts, and others respond. It might be suitable to find a special, quiet place at home for your Sunday prayers.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

A: Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

Sign of the Cross

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A: Amen.

Introduction

L: Finally we get to the Christmas story! It seems as though all through Advent we have been spending so much time with Isaiah and John the Baptist, but only on this Sunday we get to meet Mary and Joseph, and share in their journey of preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Some years we spend with Joseph, but this year it is with Mary, as we hear of her joyful willingness to be part of God's plan of salvation. As we prepare to meet Jesus today, we ask Mary to help us. We begin by calling to mind our sins and asking for God's mercy:

Penitential Act

L: Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of God's kingdom. Lord, have mercy.

A: Lord, have mercy.

L: You come in word and in sacrament to strengthen us and make us holy. Christ, have mercy.

A: Christ, have mercy.

L: You will come again in glory with salvation for your people. Lord, have mercy.

A: Lord, have mercy.

L: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

A: Amen.

Opening Prayer

L: Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

A: Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gospel Reading

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Reflection

Sometimes a story is so well known we stop thinking about it – and that can be true of the story of Jesus' birth. From early childhood we have heard this story, and it can become too familiar. It is worth stopping this week, if we can, and reading through it with new eyes, to see where we may have missed some of the power of God's love revealed in the coming of Jesus. Today is a perfect example – the story of the Annunciation is so well known! So let's just pause for a moment and listen again. It begins with a visit from an angel: was that "disturbing" for Mary? How exactly did the angel appear? Or was it just the words that were "deeply disturbing" – and if so, why? "*Rejoice, so highly favoured!*" is hardly a scary sentence! This is Mary's own recollection, shared with Saint Luke, so years later she must still have held on to the memory of that "disturbing" greeting. It's important to remember this when we get to the other end of the story, when Mary says "*Let what you have said be done to me.*" Sometimes we can assume it was easy for her to say "yes" – but remember how "deeply disturbing" this all was! It took great faith and great courage for Mary to agree to God's plan, and we should never underestimate this. What went through her mind – the promises of the Old Testament, coming true in her womb? How she would tell Joseph, her family and friends? Concern for Elizabeth? Spend a moment, if you can, with Mary in this moment. And allow her strength, faith and love of God to guide you in your choices today and throughout this week.

For our Younger Friends

We are so close now! This Sunday we think of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and what a hard time she had! She had to change all her plans when the angel visited her - imagine

having to give up your holidays, or move away from friends, or change school (you may have done all these things!) – it’s hard when we have to change our plans. But Mary was willing to do this because God was asking. And then it keeps getting worse! She can’t have her baby at home, because some Roman Emperor wants a census taken, so she has to travel to this place called Bethlehem. And even there, it gets worse still – there’s no room anywhere, so they have to make do with a stable! Poor Mary! AND YET ... Mary trusted God through it all. Have a think about this as you get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus this week.

If gathering as a family, perhaps now continue to discuss what this Gospel passage means to you. If alone, think about what key message you take from the Scriptures today.

Profession of Faith

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, 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.

Intercessions

L: As we await the celebration of Christ’s birth, we pray for him to come again, to heal the pain of our world and fulfill the hopes of the Church.

L: For our world; that all places where violence reigns may be healed by the Lord’s gift of peace. Lord, in your mercy:

A: Hear our prayer.

L: For the Church; that we may all learn from Mary’s example of trust and obedience to the plan of God. Lord, in your mercy:

A: Hear our prayer.

L: For all those who find this time of year difficult, especially those who

are caring for sick loved ones or mourning a family death. Lord, in your mercy:

A: Hear our prayer.

L: For our departed brothers and sisters; that they may be embraced by the Lord at the eternal banquet of heaven. Lord, in your mercy:

A: Hear our prayer.

Please add your own prayers for the needs of the Church, the world and your local community. You may wish to add particular prayers for family members, friends or neighbours in need at this time.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer

L: At the Saviour’s command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

A: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

L: May the Holy Spirit, O Lord, sanctify our gifts and prayers, just as he filled with his power the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

Before Spiritual Communion

L: Loving Father, all the oracles of the prophets foretold the coming of your Son, the Virgin Mother longed for him with love beyond all telling, John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came. It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise. At the Last Supper he showed the fullness of your love, as he gave his Body and Blood for his people. Even though we are not in Church, and not able to receive communion today, we open our minds and hearts now to your generous love and the gift of Jesus your Son, welcoming him spiritually into our lives.

Spiritual Communion

A: My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love you above all

things and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my soul so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever. Amen.

Pause for a moment of silent prayer and reflection.

Thanksgiving Psalm

L: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

A: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

L: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord; through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.

Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever, that your truth is firmly established as the heavens.

A: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

L: ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one;

I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your dynasty for ever and set up your throne through all ages.

A: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

L: ‘He will say to me: “You are my father, my God, the rock who saves me.” I will keep my love for him always; with him my covenant shall last.’

A: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

Final Prayer and Blessing

L: Let us pray.

Having received this pledge of eternal redemption, we pray, almighty God, that, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer, so we may press forward all the more eagerly to the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son’s Nativity. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

A: Amen.

L: May the Lord ✠ bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

A: Amen.

L: Let us bless the Lord!

A: Thanks be to God!