

## ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**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.**

## COLLECT

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 be 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, one God, for ever and ever.

## FIRST READING

5:1-4

*A reading from the prophet Micah*

The Lord says this:

You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old.

The Lord is therefore going to abandon them

till the time when she who is to give birth gives birth.

Then the remnant of his brothers will come back to the sons of Israel.

He will stand and feed his flock

with the power of the Lord,

with the majesty of the name of his God.

They will live secure, for from then on he will extend his power

to the ends of the land.

He himself will be peace.

*The word of the Lord.*

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 79

**Response: God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

1. O shepherd of Israel, hear us, shine forth from your cherubim throne.

O Lord, rouse up your might,

O Lord, come to our help. (R.)

2. God of hosts, turn again, we implore, look down from heaven and see.

Visit this vine and protect it, the vine your right hand has planted.

(R.)

3. May your hand be on the man you have chosen,

the man you have given your strength.

And we shall never forsake you again: give us life that we may call upon your name.

(R.)

## SECOND READING

10:5-10

*A reading from the letter to the Hebrews*

This is what Christ said, on coming into the world:

You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me.

You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin;

then I said,

just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book,

'God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will.'

Notice that he says first: You did not want what the Law lays down as the things to be offered, that is: the sacrifices, the oblations, the holocausts and the sacrifices for sin, and you took no pleasure in them; and then he says: Here I am! I am coming to obey your will. He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once and for all by Jesus Christ.

*The word of the Lord.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me.**

**Alleluia!**

## GOSPEL

1:39-44

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke*

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the Holy Spirit, O Lord, sanctify these gifts laid upon your altar, just as he filled with his power the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Through Christ our Lord.

## COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.**

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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.

## GOSPEL REFLECTION



How can you share the good news of Jesus as Mary did with her cousin Elizabeth?

Do you have the grace to do God's will as Mary did when she responded to the angel?

In what way is Mary a good role model for you?

How do you know God's will for you? How can God's will be discerned? How does a community know God's will for them?

What do you think is the greater celebration the birth of Jesus, or his death and resurrection? Why?

*Why did God fulfil his promise of a saviour in Jesus, a teacher who preached compassion and love, rather than a warrior king as the Jews anticipated? Could a warrior saviour have reached across cultural and political lines the way Jesus did?*

Is the birth of Jesus the beginning of our salvation? How?

What will be uppermost in your hearts this Christmas Day?

## GOSPEL ACTION

Share your thoughts about what Christmas means to you with a friend this week. Resolve to pray for a different person on each of the coming days before Christmas.

## Readings – The Holy Family Year C

**First Reading:** 1 Sam 1:20-22.24-28

**Second Reading:** 1 John 3:1-2.21-24

**Gospel:** Luke 2:41-52

## Homily

### 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C

Dear friends, for the last couple of weeks we have been focussing on the great Advent character John the Baptist and we have been reflecting on how we can prepare a way for the Lord this Advent. As we get ever closer to Christmas the focus on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent switches to Mary and in the Gospel today we have the wonderful account of the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth that is often referred to as the Visitation.

More is going on in this meeting than one expectant mother visiting another; both women have been caught up in God's great plan to send his son into the world. Both women are pregnant, Mary carries the unborn Christ-child in her womb and Elizabeth carries John the Baptist, the one who will announce his coming.

In this encounter two great women meet - the lives of both have been touched in different ways by the Holy Spirit. They are both crucial to God becoming Emmanuel, God with us, God becoming one of us and truly like us.

The relationship between Mary and Elizabeth is uncertain, some translators use the word cousin and others kinswoman to denote it, but one thing is sure the idea that they were close relatives has always been clear. Elizabeth was older, the young Mary was in need of support and she would have naturally turned to an older woman. Elizabeth would have needed the help of a younger woman to help her in her pregnancy.

Yet as well as the two mothers encountering each other, two unborn children also encounter each other for the first time. When Mary greets Elizabeth the child in her womb leaps for joy, because both she and her child know that they are in the presence of the Lord. Jesus is there among them hidden in Mary's womb. Mary is blessed because she is pregnant with the saviour of the world. Elizabeth rightly calls her the mother of the Lord, the blessed fruit of her womb.

In a few days from now we shall be placing the baby Jesus into our Christmas crib. The figure of that tiny baby reminds us that God has not only blessed us by creating us, but also chosen to become one with us. Mary and Elizabeth had faith to believe in God's promises, they were prepared to trust in God's word.

## **Homily**

### **19<sup>th</sup> December 2021 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C**

The Visitation is an invitation to deepen our faith and our trust in God's love. It's a call to recognise the people that we meet and allow Christ to shine through our fragile human lives.

Mary and Elizabeth were unique in what God asked of them and we too have a unique calling. We are all called to be bearers of Christ Jesus, because Jesus needs to be continually born in our hearts and lives so that others will be able to recognise and experience Jesus through us.

In faith and trust today we pray that we will be open to receiving Jesus this Christmas and that through us Jesus and the great love of God will be experienced by many others.

Waiting in joyful hope and expectancy with you, God bless, **Fr Phil x.**

## **Bidding Prayers and Synod Prayer**

**19<sup>th</sup> December 2021 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C**

### **Priest:**

As we get ever closer to Christmas on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent we bring all our prayers before the Lord.

### **Reader:**

For the Church and Christians everywhere: may they be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit this Christmas.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For ourselves: may we always be good stewards of Creation caring for our World and all those in it.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who are poor or in need: following the example of Christ may we always help and serve them particularly at this Christmas time with love, generosity and compassion.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For migrants and refugees, particularly our refugees here in Wallasey; may we do all we can to help and support them.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those in our parish who are sick or housebound: may they come to know the love, peace and the comforting presence of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the faithful departed especially **Victoria Coverdale, Jeffrey Wallace** and all who have died recently and those whose anniversaries occur around this time:  
**“Eternal rest grant unto them...”**

We pray through the intercession of Mary our mother: **“Hail Mary...”**

In silence we bring our own private prayers and intentions before the Lord.

**Priest:** Loving Father,

As we prepare for the coming of the Lord this Christmas  
we offer these and all our prayers to you,  
through your Son Jesus,  
who is Christ Our Lord, Amen.

## **Bidding Prayers and Synod Prayer**

**19<sup>th</sup> December 2021 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C**

### **Synod Prayer**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever. **Amen**