

OUR SUNDAY CELEBRATION

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT / B

24 DECEMBER 2023

A DWELLING PLACE FOR GOD. King David wanted to build a fine temple in which God would dwell among the people. But God did not choose a building made of stones and mortar for a dwelling place but the womb of the virgin Mary. God continues to dwell among us in Mary's son, Jesus Christ, whose body is the Church. Let us pray for a deepening of faith this Christmas that we, like Mary, may continue to give Christ to the world.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON cf. Isa 45:8

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.

GREETING

P. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

P. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

R. And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

P. Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

P. You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

P. You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.

R. Christ, have mercy.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

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

R. Amen.

The Gloria is not said during Advent.

COLLECT

P. 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.

R. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING 2 Sam 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

A reading from the second book of Samuel

The kingdom of David will be established for ever in the sight of the Lord.

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent.' Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.'

But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:

'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever."'

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

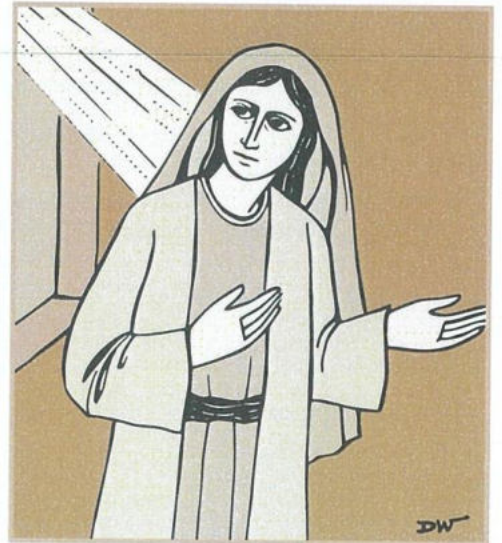
Ps 88: 2-5, 27, 29. R. cf. v. 2

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

1. 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. **R.**

2. '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.' **R.**

3. He will say to me: 'You are my father, / my God, the rock who saves me.' / I will keep my love for him always; / for him my covenant shall endure. **R.**



SECOND READING

Rom 16:25-27

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

The mystery kept secret for endless ages is now revealed.

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 1:38

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the servant of the Lord: may his will for me be done. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 1:26-38

P. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit

P. A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

You will conceive and bear a son.

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



ST MARTHA'S PARISH STRATHFIELD

Parish Priest: Father John Hayes

Assistant Priest: Father Liem Duong

Administration Coordinator: Nicolle Mazzaferro (Mon, Tues & Thurs) admin@stmarthas.org.au

Administration Support: Larissa Argiro (Friday) office@stmarthas.org.au

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Safeguarding Officer: Dianne Dawson & Helen Williamson safeguarding@stmarthas.org.au

Parish Ministries Coordinator: Helen Williamson

Music Ministry: Marcella Ayoub

Children's Liturgy Coordinator: Alannah Hickry

Plenary Council Ambassador: Helena O'Neil



'You will conceive and bear a Son' ... Luke 1

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Parish Office Hours:

Mon, Tues & Thurs 9am-5pm & Fridays 9am-3pm



St Martha's School: 9764 1184

Email: info@stmstrathfield.catholic.edu.au

Principal: Carolyn Parsell

Assist Principal: Steven Belcastro

Acting REC: Cindy Ronzini

THE PARISH OF ST MARTHA'S ACKNOWLEDGES THE WANGUL PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND ON WHICH THE CHURCH IS BUILT

Vision:

**Welcoming
Eucharistic
Transformed by the Word
Full of Grace
Proclaiming Good News**



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through the Church
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Mission:

**Alive with the Spirit
Inspired by St Martha
We Celebrate & Witness
God's love
Using our Gifts & Talents**



MASS TIMES

Tuesday: 7.30am

Wednesday: 9.10am

Thursday: 9.10am

Friday: 9.10am

Saturday: 9.10am, 5pm Vigil Mass

Sunday: 8.00am; 10.00am & 6.00pm



1st Saturday of every month:

8.30am Adoration followed by Mass

RECONCILIATION:

Saturday after 9.10am Mass or by appointment.

SYDNEY MALAYALEE ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Rosary, Mass & Adoration from 6.30pm to 8.00pm on the 2nd Saturday of each month.



BAPTISM:

2nd & 4th Sundays of the month at 11.00am
(One month's notice is required).

Baptism Preparation by appointment only.
Contact the Parish office for more information.

MARRIAGES: By appointment only.
(6 months' notice is required).

ROSARY:

Tuesday & Saturday after morning Mass

Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 8.30am

7.30pm on Fridays in conjunction with Marian Movement of Priests
Cenacle and Divine Mercy Chaplet.



PRAYER GROUP / ADORATION AT ST MARTHA'S CHURCH:

Resumes February 2024



**Please support our Catholic Press
Copies of the Catholic Weekly \$2
& Catholic Leader \$2.50 are available
at the Church Entrance.**



**GLUTEN FREE HOSTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR ANY
CELIAC PARISHIONERS. IF YOU WISH TO
RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION PLEASE TELL THE
CHURCH WARDEN OR SEE AN ACOLYTE IN THE
SACRISTY PRIOR TO MASS.**

SAFE GUARDING

A reminder to parents that the Notice-Board located at the side entrance contains various resources for children regarding Safeguarding.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SYDNEY.

Child sexual abuse is a crime. The appropriate people to deal with crimes are the police. If you, or anyone you know, have been abused, please contact the police. Alternatively, you can contact the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office at (02) 9390 5810 or safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org

You may also want to speak to your Parish Priest who will be able to provide support and guidance. The Archdiocese has a legal obligation to report crimes to the police.

Commitment Statement

The Archdiocese of Sydney is wholly committed to ensuring the safety, well-being and dignity of all Children and Adults at Risk, and it acknowledges its important legal, moral and spiritual responsibility to create a safe and nurturing environment for Children and Adults.



Office of the
Children's Guardian

Please be aware that if you "TAG" St Martha's in photos on your Facebook page, the images also appear on an "unofficial" St Martha's Facebook page. This "unofficial" page was created automatically by Facebook and is not controlled by St Martha's. We kindly remind you to take care when uploading photos of any children without parent consent.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MINISTRIES YOU ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN IN - ACOLYTES; READERS; EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS; CHOIR; CHILDREN'S LITURGY (LEADERS & CHILDREN) & SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM (LEADERS & CHILDREN). SIGN IN FOLDERS ARE KEPT IN THE SACRISTY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

ALTAR SERVERS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN THE SACRISTY WITHOUT A PARENT/TEACHER. THE SIGN IN FOLDER IS LOCATED IN THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE SACRISTY.

Prayer for Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles

Fourth Candle - The Candle of Love



Leader: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Last Sunday we lit the Candles of Hope, Peace & Joy. We light them again as we remember Jesus, born in Bethlehem, our hope and our peace. *(A person lights the Candles of Hope, Peace & Joy)*

Today we light the fourth Candle of Advent, the Candle of Love. In their old age God gave to Zechariah and Elisabeth a son called John. John spoke to the people bravely in the desert denying his own comforts and prepared to die for what he believed. John taught that we should share what we have with others, treat each other kindly and show God's love. He did this because he cared for people and wanted them to repent and find God's forgiveness. *(A person lights the Fourth Candle, the Candle of Love here)*

Love is like a candle shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the love we have in Christ.

As Christmas Eve falls on a weekend this year, below are the Mass times.

Sunday 24 th December Christmas Eve	6.00pm 11.40pm 12.00am	Christmas Eve Vigil Mass Carols Christmas Midnight Mass		
Monday 25 th December Christmas Day	8.00am 10.00am	Christmas Mass Christmas Mass (there will be no evening Mass)		
Tuesday 26 th December Boxing Day Public Holiday	9.10am	Mass - Feast of St Stephen (there will be no 7.30am Mass)		
Saturday 30 th December	5.00pm	Vigil Mass – The Holy Family		
Sunday 31 st December New Year's Eve	8.00am 10.00am 6.00pm	Mass – The Holy Family Mass – The Holy Family Mass – The Holy Family		
Monday 1 st January	9.10am	The Solemnity of Mary / New Year's Day		
Saturday 6 th January	5.00pm	Vigil Mass – The Epiphany		
Sunday 7 th January	8.00am 10.00am 6.00pm	Mass – The Epiphany Mass – The Epiphany Mass – The Epiphany		

CHRISTMAS ROSTER

	6PM VIGIL	MIDNIGHT	8AM	10AM
Special Ministers	Beatrice Bonett	Maria Soares	Marian McCluskey	Rachel Suriano
	Jacqueline Romanous	Vince Blefari	Volunteer Needed	Rita Pirras
	Jacqueline Bonett	Steven Doumit	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed
	6PM VIGIL	MIDNIGHT	8AM	10AM
Readers	Merlyn D'Souza	Natalie Bains	Greg Glass	Helen Williamson
	Donald Bonett	Mark Soares	Paulina Roncevic	Volunteer Needed
	6PM VIGIL	MIDNIGHT	8AM	10AM
Altar Servers	Bonett Family	Lincoln M.	Liam D.	Marc K.
	Bonett Family	Hayden M.	Shannon D.	Suriano Family
	Bonett Family	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed
	Bonett Family	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed



Giuseppe Zangari, Honourable Dennis Leslie Mahoney AO KC, Kevin Francis Conolly, Dr Gilbert Vella and Br Nicholas Patrick Haras FSP OAM with Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP. Photo: Alphonsus Fok

Recently, former long-term parishioner of St Martha's, Gil Vella received a Papal Honour – Croce pro Ecclesia et Pontifice – (Cross for the Church and Pontiff) from His Holiness Pope Francis, in recognition of his profound Christian commitment to works of Mercy, and through his exceptional contribution to the life of the Church, particularly his extensive work associated with the St Vincent de Paul Society. (For the majority of those years Gil resided in this parish). We extend our congratulations and best wishes to Gil and his family.

Christmas Offering Envelopes are now Available at the Church Entrances



30th & 31st December

Special Ministers	5PM	8AM	10AM	6PM
	Vince Blefari	Gina Surjadinata	Rachel Suriano	Mary L'Estrange
	Beatrice Bonett	Andri Surjadinata	Maria Soares	Andrew Bova
Readers	5PM	8AM	10AM	6PM
	Donald Bonett	Maria Yu	Helen Williamson	Owen Loney
	Helen Blefari	Leontia Jo	Meryln D'Souza	Volunteer Needed
Altar Servers	5PM	8AM	10AM	6PM
	Grace T.	Mary Louise I.	Jay L.	Oliver B.
	Peter T.	Ryan W.	Jarvis L.	Marina B.
	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Beatrice L.	Volunteer Needed
Wardens	5PM	8AM	10AM	6PM
	Edith Pun	Peter Yamin	Trudie Rogers	Phil/Anthony



Background on the Gospel Reading (Loyola Press)

This Sunday we read the story of the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary about the birth of Jesus. This story is found only in Luke's Gospel. On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the liturgy shifts our attention from John the Baptist to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both John and Mary serve as important figures for our reflection during the season of Advent; they both played instrumental roles in preparing the way for Jesus. Last week we reflected on John the Baptist's announcement that the Savior was among us, although not yet recognized. This week we reflect upon Mary's example of faith and obedience to God, traits which permitted her to receive the angel's message that God's Son would be born as a human person, as one of us. We are familiar with the story of the Annunciation, and it is fitting that we recall how God announced the birth of Jesus as we make our final preparations for

our celebration of the Incarnation. The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Mary greeted the angel's news with awe and wonder and asked how it could be possible that she could give birth to a child. In his reply, the angel Gabriel announced the seemingly impossible reality: the child to be born would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would be God's own Son. The angel reported to Mary another miracle; her relative Elizabeth was also pregnant despite having been thought to be unable to have a child. Mary's response to the angel, which is called her fiat, is an example of complete faith and obedience to God. The story of the Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give birth to his Son so that all humanity would know God's salvation. Mary, already full of God's grace, was able to cooperate in this great plan for our salvation. Thus Jesus was born as one of us, fully human and also fully divine. This is the mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and are able respond with obedience.



Family Connection: One of the challenges of faith is to recognize God's plan for us and to remain open to God's will and God's actions in our world. Filled with God's grace, Mary models for us the kind of faith that is needed to cooperate in God's plan of salvation. Like Mary, we are given the awesome opportunity to cooperate in God's saving plan. On this final Sunday of Advent, our Gospel invites us to consider how our preparations for Christmas have made us more aware of God's grace working in our lives. Gather together your family and talk about what you have been doing as a family to prepare for Christmas. How have these preparations helped you to better celebrate the central mystery of Christmas, the Incarnation? Our Gospel today talks about how Mary was prepared for her role in Christ's birth. Read today's Gospel, Luke 1:26-38. Consider the question: What enabled Mary to say yes to God? Which of your Advent activities have made you more aware of God's grace in your life? Conclude in prayer together that God's grace will enable your family to be more faithful and obedient to God. Pray together the Magnificat.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

MASS OFFERINGS

Recently Deceased:	James Coughlan, Tony Grace, Les Maley, Tony Grace, Sam Galluzzo, Bill O'Riordan.
Repose of The Soul:	Fr Adrian Horgan, Fr Paul Ryan, Br Ray Dowding, Francesco Campanale, Francis Doumit, Frederick McDowell, Dorothy Harris, Daniel Lucich, James Brady, Ken Fraser, Elizabeth Keating, John McManus, Aldo Amarino, Salvatore Puglisi, William & Dorothy Starr, Bruce & Estelle Thurn, Anne Cecilia Glass, Reginald & Agnes Glass, Gerald & Frances Gleeson, Faado & Alice Herro, Roger O'Reilly, Patrick & Janet Reynolds, Jim Reynolds, Ken Rich, Monica & Patrick Ryan, Francesco & Mary Sorbello, Betty Warbrick, Gerald Wilson, Dr Stephanie Winfield, Philip Winfield, Mary Trefle', Anne Trefle', Elie Sahyoun, Alan & Peg Bailey, Matteo & Caterina Genova, Francesco & Maria Colagiuri, Lisa Cooke, Michael & Mary Cassar, Giuseppe & Romilda Reginato, Julian & Mabel Doyle & Jim Bradbury.
Anniversaries:	Gerald Gleeson, Des McNamara, Anne Cecilia Glass, Beryl Erskine, Norma McMillan, Michael D'Cunha, Peter & Marie Hetherston, Emily Mattar, Annie Bonett, Anna Torresan, Maria Pagano, Maria Rosa Natale, Ethan Yan, John St George, Dorothea (Dorothy) Starr, Jack Dawson, Michael & Nolliag Donegan, Thomas Kenny, John Harrington, Mary Dinhvu & John Hao Vu, Margaret Raeburn.
Sick Intentions:	Damien Gleeson, Dareth Flavell, George Bugeja, Rudy Raeburn, Carminella Tiberio, Theo McLean, Joseph Akkary, Sylvia Watson, Sheree Mouawad, Virgilio Lim, George Jabbour, Dr Maher Ishak Morian, Graham Byrnes, Stephanie Harrington, Phil Harriss, Sophie O'Donnell, Ken South, Ajith Antony, Pat Fraser, Siena Fabrie, Giuseppe Faraone, Joanna Jo, Simon Alam, Rosanne Sukkar, Henry D'Souza, Kevin O'Connor.
Special Intentions:	Deceased friends, relatives & Benefactors of the Dominican Order. The Bowden Family, Antonia, Giuseppe, Raffaele, Teresa, Matteo, Filomena & Maria Pagano, Caterina & Francesco Agostino, Sofie & Jerome Druart.

PARISH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY 25 TH DECEMBER	TUESDAY 26 TH DECEMBER	WEDNESDAY 27 TH DECEMBER	THURSDAY 28 TH DECEMBER	FRIDAY 29 TH DECEMBER
PUBLIC HOLIDAY CLOSED	PUBLIC HOLIDAY CLOSED	CLOSED	9AM – 5PM Nicolle	9AM – 3PM Larissa
MONDAY 1 ST JANUARY	TUESDAY 2 ND JANUARY	WEDNESDAY 3 RD JANUARY	THURSDAY 4 TH JANUARY	FRIDAY 5 TH JANUARY
PUBLIC HOLIDAY CLOSED	9AM – 5PM Nicolle	CLOSED	9AM – 5PM Nicolle	CLOSED



NO ROOM IN THE INN by Ron Rolheiser

Jesus was born outside of the city, outside of a hospital, outside of a normal house. The Gospels tell us he was born in a stable, outside the city because there was no room for them in the inn. We have always vilified the infamous innkeeper who turned Mary and Joseph away, and the lesson we took from this was the need for less self-preoccupation in our lives, that we should not be so busy and preoccupied that there's no room for the divine to be born in our lives. Indeed, there's a lesson there, one I need for my own life. Given the pressures of the past few weeks, so far this year I haven't had the chance to give Christmas more than a passing thought. No room in my inn right now! And so, I nurse a lot of sympathy for that original innkeeper, knowing how easily we can over-pack our lives so that there's no room left to welcome in a divine visitor. Now, while that's an important challenge, biblical scholars suggest there's a deeper lesson in the fact that Jesus was born in a stable outside the city because there was no room for him in the inn. The real point the Gospels are making is not so much the seeming callousness of an innkeeper, but rather the fact that Jesus was born outside of a city, outside of what's comfortable, outside of glamour and fame, outside of being recognized by the rich and the powerful, outside of notice by the everyday world. Jesus was born in anonymity, poor, outside of all notice, except by faith and God. His birth outside the city also foreshadowed his death and burial. Jesus' earthly life will end as it began, as a stranger, an outsider,

crucified outside the city, buried outside the city, just as he was born outside the city. Thomas Merton once gave a particularly poignant comment on this: Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because He cannot be at home in it, because He is out of place in it, and yet must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied status as persons, who are tortured, bombed, and exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in the world. He is mysteriously present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst. Jesus was born into this world unnoticed, outside the city, outside of all persons and events that seemed important at the time. Two thousand years later, we now recognize the importance of that birth. Indeed, the world measures time by it. We are in the year 2021 since that unnoticed birth. However, at the time, almost no one took notice. What's the lesson? What's the takeaway? Among other things, this is meant to give us a different perspective vis-à-vis what's ultimately important in this world and what isn't. Who ultimately shapes history? The big movers and shakers or those on the outside? Biblically speaking, most of us were born outside the city, meaning that in our lives we will forever be the outsiders, unknowns, anonymous, small-time, small-town, persons who are incidental to the big picture and the big action. Our photo and our story will never grace the headlines. Our names will never be up in lights and we will live and die in basic anonymity, not known by many outside of our own small circles. Most of us will live out our lives in quiet obscurity, in rural areas, in small towns, and in the unknown parts of our cities, watching the big events of our world from the outside and always seeing someone other than ourselves as important. We ourselves, seemingly, will remain forever unknown and our talents and contributions will not be particularly noticed by anyone, perhaps not even by our own families. Figuratively, we will always be "outside the city". We will live, work, and give birth to love and life in humble places. Perhaps most painful of all, we will know the frustration of being unable to truly give our talents and gifts over to the world, but will find instead that the deepest symphonies and melodies that live within us will never find much expression in the outside world. Our dreams and our deepest riches will never find much of an earthly stage. There will never be a place in the inn for what's best in us to be born. Our deep riches, like Jesus' birth in our world, will remain "outside the city", ultimately dying by the martyrdom of anonymity and inadequate self-expression (also "outside the city"). Mary gave birth to the Christ in a barn outside the city because there was no room in the inn. This is a comment on more than just the inhospitality of one over-stressed innkeeper. It's an important teaching on how we need to assess what ultimately shapes life. In essence, it tells us that it's not necessarily those who seemingly preside at the centre of things (the powerful, the rich, the famous, the government leaders, the entertainment celebrities, the corporate heads, the scholars, the academics) who will have time measured by their lives. What's deepest, most meaningful, and most important in life is often born in anonymity, unnoticed by the powerful, tenderly swaddled in faith, outside the city.



GAZA CRISIS APPEAL

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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.

R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ

HOMILY

PROFESSION OF FAITH APOSTLES' CREED

Or the Nicene Creed may be said.

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.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

After the priest raises the paten with the bread and prays, and then the chalice, we respond to each prayer:

R. Blessed be God for ever.

P. Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

R. May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

P. 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.

R. Amen.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

P. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

P. Lift up your hearts.

R. We lift them up to the Lord.

P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

R. It is right and just.

PREFACE II OF ADVENT

After the Preface, we sing or say:

All: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

THE MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

P. The mystery of faith.

All: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

COMMUNION RITE

P. At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven ...

P. Deliver us, Lord, we pray ...

All: For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.

P. Lord Jesus Christ, who said ...

R. Amen.

P. The peace of the Lord be with you always.

R. And with your spirit.

P. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

All exchange a sign of peace

LAMB OF GOD

All: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P. Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

R. Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Isa 7:14

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son;

and his name will be called Emmanuel.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P. 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.

R. Amen.

P. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

P. May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

P. Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

R. Thanks be to God.

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

THE ANNUNCIATION

On the eve of Christmas, today's Gospel reminds us of how the birth of Jesus is possible. Luke's narrative describes God sending the Angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee. It is a familiar story to us, yet nothing of it is in our realm of experience.

This event is reported in a series of stories paralleling the annunciation and birth accounts of John the Baptist and Jesus. The narrative will present John as herald of the arrival of Jesus as Messiah when the time of his public ministry arrives, fulfilling God's promise.

Rightly this is an account of God's activity via Gabriel announcing first to Zechariah and then to Mary. Here is a moment bathed in God's grace. God's incarnation will occur in a natural human manner, born of a woman. Yet take a focus on Mary and imagine again the appearance of an angel. No surprise that she might be perplexed (Luke 1:29). Yet Mary responds, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." (v. 38).

Mary also hears of her cousin Elisabeth's fortunate conception and sets off to see her. Their meeting, the centrepiece of the double annunciations and births, reveals these two women in embrace, together they usher in the birth of the Son of God. Today, the focus is on Mary's embrace of her mission but she is part of a larger story, God's story. Mary is a courageous woman who in the face of an impossible challenge steps forward in faith.

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