

Sunday Readings

22 December 2024

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 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, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Micah 5:1-4

Thus says the LORD:

You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the
strength of the LORD,

in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be
great

to the ends of the earth.

And he shall be their peace.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 70:2-3. 15-16. 18-19. R/. v.4

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

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/.**

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/.**

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

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

10:5-10

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came into the world,
he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt
offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.
Then I said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O
God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book." '

When he said above, 'You have neither desired nor
taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt
offerings and sin offerings' (these are offered according
to the Law), then he added, 'Behold, I have come to
do your will'. He does away with the first in order to
establish the second. And by that will we have been
sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus
Christ once for all.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Lk 1:38

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the handmaid of the Lord:

let what you have said be done to me.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 1:39-44

The Lord be with you.

And with your Spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into
the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered
the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And
when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby
leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the
Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry,
'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the
fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that
the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold,
when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the
baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she
who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what
was spoken to her from the Lord.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

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.

Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lectionary Year C

The Word of God

Advent Reflection

Today is the Fourth and final Sunday before Christmas. And on this last Sunday, we change our focus. The past two Sundays have centred on the ascetic, somewhat fierce figure of John the Baptist. In the Gospel Reading of today, the Church gives us the figure of Our Lady to imitate: she was the one who first welcomed Christ at the first Christmas and she can help us welcome Him now.



In the Gospel we come down with a bump into the real world. From the grand prophetic language of Micah we are brought to a small remote corner of Israel. St. Luke's account of Mary's visit to her cousin

Elizabeth, underlines the mystery of Christ in our midst. In the Gospel passage, Luke very skilfully sets the stage for the coming of the Messiah. The meeting of the two expectant mothers is also the meeting of their sons. John leaps with joy in the womb of Elizabeth, and thus acknowledges the presence of the one prophesied. As soon as Mary enters into the presence of Elizabeth, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and praises Mary for her faith and trust in God: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Elizabeth recognized the presence of God, the Messiah, in Mary, the living Ark of God and burst into praise and said prophetically: "Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?" Both Mary and Elizabeth already anticipate the joy of God's presence and salvation unfolding before them. This beautiful meeting leads us into the very centre of Advent, namely the prayerful anticipation of the mystery already among us.

On this final Sunday of Advent, the Word of God invites us to discover anew the true meaning of Christmas - 'Emmanuel' i.e. 'God is with us.' Micah challenges us to hope in God especially in the face of disappointments; the author of Hebrews, to do the will of God as best we can discern that will; and the Gospel, to trust always in God as Mary did, so that we can bring forth the Word made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, and be a sign of God's presence to one another.

Last Days of Advent St. Pope John Paul II, Dec. 18, 2002

Pope John Paul II in his address on Dec. 18, 2002 said, "The liturgy of Advent...helps us to understand fully the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event, which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, it is necessary to understand that the whole of our life must be an 'advent,' a vigilant awaiting of the final coming of Christ. To predispose our mind to welcome the Lord who, as we say in the Creed, one day will come to judge the living and the dead, we must learn to recognize him as present in the events of daily life. Therefore, Advent is, so to speak, an intense training that directs us decisively toward him who already came, who will come, and who comes into our lives continuously."

Prayer of the Week

A Prayer in Preparation for Christmas

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ, experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

