

MARY AND THE WORD OF GOD

(LUKE 1:26-38)



Mary is the central figure in Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. Our Gospel reading today presents us with the scene of the annunciation of the birth of Jesus by the angel Gabriel, God's messenger.

However, this is not a simple announcement: Mary is not the passive instrument by whom God's purpose is achieved; rather, this depends on Mary's willingness to accept her place in God's plan. Throughout Luke's Gospel account, the evangelist emphasises the importance of God's *word*. It is this word that Mary accepts and to which she commits herself. In this way, she is the model of the disciple, one who listens to God's word, meditates upon it and puts it into practice. We hear this theme restated in different ways often in Luke's narrative.

The annunciation of a birth is a frequent event in the Bible and the last example before this one is that given to Zechariah in the Temple, about the birth of John the Baptist. Such an account indicates the importance of the child to be born and his place in the Lord's plan for Israel. But there is a crucial difference between the annunciation to Mary and all the rest. In every other case, the woman has been unable to bear a child, which to everyone else would be an indication of punishment from God, hence the shame attached to her condition. God intervenes to remove the cause of her barrenness and the child is conceived in the normal way. There is no indication that Mary suffers from any condition which would prevent her having a child – quite the reverse – but Luke's concern is to show that Jesus has no human father and is the Son of God. The virginal conception of Jesus is a far greater miracle than the birth of the heroes of Israel – and of John the Baptist. ■

DO

Put out the figure of Mary from your crib set: use it during the week to help you reflect on Mary and her positive response to God's word.



LEARN

The mystery of the incarnation is better described as "the virginal conception of Jesus", rather than "the virgin birth".

Annunciation narratives in the Bible are stereotyped stories, designed to highlight the importance of the child to be born.

The annunciation to Mary is the only story of this type to include a virginal conception.

SAY

**Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.**

REFLECT

Advent is the season when we think of Mary's place in the story of God's dealings with the human race and of her importance in the life of the Church, the people of God. She is held up as a model for the disciples of Jesus. But even for Luke, her importance lies not so much in her being the physical mother of Jesus, but in her attitude to the word of God, listening, meditating and putting it into practice. It is in this that Mary can be our model.

We may feel that we cannot do much to advance the kingdom of God, but as long as we try to live up to our Christian calling, then we are doing all that the Lord expects of us. Bringing up a family, living our life in the light of our faith, is what being a disciple of Jesus is all about. One thing we might keep in mind is that Mary and Joseph were real human beings, and it is clear that committing themselves to God's plan was not easy. In that, they can be truly examples that we can follow. ■

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 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 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

A reading from the second book of Samuel.
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.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 88

Response:

I will sing for ever of your love, O 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;
with him my covenant shall endure. (R.)

SECOND READING Romans 16:25-27

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Romans.

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.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

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

GOSPEL

Luke 1:26-38

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Luke.

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.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,**

**begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

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.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

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

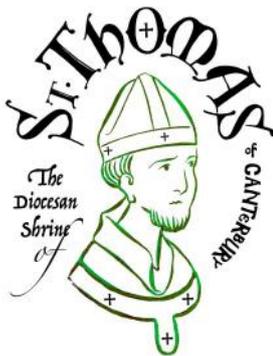
PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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.
Amen.

Which Mary? A woman "blessed because she
believed" always and everywhere in God's
words, or a "plaster statue" from whom we
beg favours at little cost? The Virgin Mary
of the Gospel, venerated by the Church at
prayer, or a Mary of our own making, one
who restrains the arm of a vengeful God, one
sweeter than Jesus the ruthless judge, one
more merciful than the Lamb slain for us?

Pope Francis

NEWSLETTER



CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

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Web Site: www.stthomasofcanterbury.com St Thomas of Canterbury

Parish Priest: Canon Anthony Charlton email: anthonycharlton@rcaos.org.uk

Assistant Priest: Fr John Howard

email: johnhoward@rcaos.org.uk

Parish Administrator: Miss Linda Scott

St Thomas' Shop (01227 462896): OPEN SUNDAYS FROM AFTER 9.30 MASS UNTIL 12 NOON

University of Kent Chaplaincy: Fr Tom Herbst (01843 230 774) email: tjherbst@gmail.com

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School: Head Teacher: Miss Lisa D'Agostini (01227 462539)

St Anselm's Catholic Secondary School: Exec Prin: Mr M Walters; Academy Prin: Mr J Rowarth (01227 826200)

The Parish Office is Closed & Linda is working from home. Linda can access emails via the church email so please contact her this way initially.

ALL MASSES ARE LIVESTREAMED

6.00pm (Vigil): Mary Irwin's intentions (Dempsey Family)
THE SEASON OF ADVENT (B)

SECOND COLLECTION: Apostleship of the Sea

Sunday 20th Dec: 4th Sunday of Advent Lk1: 26-36

8.00: People of the Parish

9.30am: In thanksgiving (*Hilary McKernan*)

11.00am: Catherine (Kath) Packer - RIP (*Bernard & Fam*)

2.00 pm: Confirmation Mass

4.00 pm: Mass for the Polish Community

6.00 pm: for All those suffering from Covid-19

Monday 21st Dec: Feria Lk 1: 39-45

7.30 am: for the welfare of all the Volunteer Stewards

12 noon: Frances & Michael-Joe Keavney - RIP

6.00 pm Live streamed Prayer

Tuesday 22nd Dec: Feria Lk 1: 46-56

12 noon: Christine, Anastasia & John - RIP

6.00 pm Live streamed Prayer

Wednesday 23rd Dec: Feria Lk 1: 57-66

7.30 am: Alexander Grogan (*Catherine*)

10.30am: Reconciliation - Fr Anthony

12 noon: Sheila Lloyd - RIP (*Scott Family*)

6.00 pm Live streamed Prayer

Thursday 24th Dec: Feria Lk1: 67-79

4.00 pm: Welfare of Elizabeth Carlow (*Brigid Rowe*)

6.00pm: A Charles RYAN - RIP (*Pauline*)

9.30pm: Ellen Fitz-Gerald - RIP (*Mary Diugwu*)

11.30pm: Becky Judge - RIP (*Mum and Dad*)

Friday 25th Dec: The Nativity of the Lord Jn 1: 1-18

8.00am: Philip Ryan - RIP (*Pauline*)

9.30am: David Heap - RIP

11.00am: John Delaney - RIP

Saturday 26th Dec: St Stephen, Martyr Mt 10: 17-22

10.30am: Reconciliation

12 noon: Athena Berba - RIP (1 yr anniv) (*Ignacio Fam*)

6.00pm (Vigil): John & Pat Ware - RIP (*Annie & John Judge*)

Sunday 27th Dec: Feast of the Holy Family Lk2: 22-40

8.00: Intentions of Mary Wright & welfare of family and friends (*Mary Wright*)

9.30am: People of the Parish

11.00am: A. Charles & Philip Ryan - RIP (*Pauline*)

6.00 pm: Welfare of Geoffrey Smart

Please keep in your prayers the twelve young people receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation on 20 December at 2pm

PARISH MATTERS

Please remember in your prayers:

Marie Strong, Pat Gill, Angeline Frizell, Alan Skeet, Louisa Ward, Janette Hughes, Barbara Brett, Mary Dittrich, Pat Gibson, Jenni Aldridge, Mary Reynolds, Brian Wicker, Joan Sutton, Audrey Martin, Elizabeth Gilhenny, Bill Parker, Lucy Purbrick, Josie Carr, Simon Lam, Sr Anne Bross (formerly of our parish), Pippa Swan, Fr John Slater, Jennifer Lang, Pauline Lilford, Barbara Markham and Patricia Gray

Please pray for the repose of the souls of: Maria Bryant, Pamela Dodds, Roberto de Paco, John Todd, Carol Mary Kidby, Anna Hesketh, Tom Hodges, Rebecca Judge, Gertraude Katherine Brock, Vera Fletcher, Maria Daniels, Maria Prado, Hannelore Hall, Bernie Fisher, Joseph McKee, Tony Kenny, Michael Jones, Douglas Ricketts, Maurice Crosland, Patricia Collins, Andrzej Czupkowski, Chris Bateman, Pia Iannacci, Antonio Iannacci, Ellen Fitzgerald, Anna Koeller and Fr Michael Gwinnell

Please pray for those whose 1st anniversaries are this month: John Perl; Ben Mutch; Anne Rotter and Martin Dunne

100 CLUB: It is that time of year when we ask parishioners to either renew their membership of or apply to join our 100 Club - the laziest way of donating to church funds while still taking a bit of a gamble! Renewal forms are available on our website (under Giving) or via email from Linda in the Office. Closing date for return of the renewal forms is Friday, 4th January 2021 and thereafter any unclaimed numbers will be allocated to new applicants. Email or phone Linda if you have questions.

Masses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

We are almost fully booked for these Masses - if you have tickets but are unable to attend, please cancel the tickets, thank you. For queries, please contact Linda via the parish email or phoning the office on Mondays or Fridays

APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA - SECOND COLLECTION

Every year churches around the world celebrate Sea Sunday. It is a day for people to come together to pray for seafarers and fishers and thank them for the vital role they play in all of our lives. We are not able to do this in the same way this year, yet, more than ever, seafarers and fishers are making huge sacrifices to ensure food, medicine, and vital equipment continues to be delivered globally. Many have been away from home for a really long time. They are tired, anxious about the future, and missing their families. More information from: <https://www.stellamaris.org.uk/seasunday/>

Please donate generously to our second collection this week to support this wonderful ministry

From Fr Anthony ...

This afternoon 12 young people from the parish will be celebrating their confirmation. This is a truly important day for them as they will be given a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Please do remember them in your prayers, not only today but as they grow in faith and confidence as disciples of Jesus. Here are their names:

Emily Rose Bellussi-Fitzgerald
Solomon Francis Bellussi-Fitzgerald,
Natalia Anna Bieszke,
Aaron William Bird,
Alexander De Sousa
Madeleine De Sousa,
Niamh Harris,
Chibuikem Ochianwata,
Massimo Morelli,
Danielle Pablo
Annika Pablo,
Tia Ariana Sneek.

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent the gospel is the Annunciation. When Mary asks the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" the angel replies, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow." The Holy Spirit comes upon these young people today so that they not only have Jesus in their hearts but the Holy Spirit given them afresh that they now have the courage to share Christ with others. They can be a powerful witness through their words and actions to the reality of Jesus.

As Mary said "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me." So too these young people will be able to say the same. This is their Yes, their Fiat.

There are one or two young people not on the list who have deferred receiving the Sacrament till next year. I would like to thank the catechists, Linda, Fran, Graeme and Chris who have helped and guided them and to their families who continue us to support them in their life of faith.

Fr John and Jesse Tree

Fr John Howard has done the fourth of four sessions on the Jesse Tree. You can watch this on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/w9NcSEfsauw>

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION APPLICATIONS 2021: Forms are available on the parish Webpage under the tab: Journey in Faith - Sacraments - Eucharist; or via email from the parish office on canterbury@rcaos.org.uk. Forms should be completed and submitted to the parish office together with the baptism certificate of the child before 10 January 2021.

Act now!

Ask your MP to oppose introducing assisted suicide

The assisted suicide lobby have launched a large campaign to pressure the Government to reconsider the legalisation of assisted suicide. It is vital that it is clear to the Government that the public want them to continue to hold strong against this pressure from assisted suicide campaigners and reject their demands. *Right To Life UK* have set up an easy to use tool which will enable you to email your MP asking them to make it clear to the Government that it should not give in to demands to reconsider legalisation of assisted suicide. Take just 30 seconds to email your MP via: <https://righttolife.org.uk/>

[StopAssistedSuicide](https://righttolife.org.uk/StopAssistedSuicide)

Daniel Turner, Right To Life UK

+44 (0) 1732 460911; daniel@righttolife.org.uk
righttolife.org.uk

ACCOMMODATION: A female Catholic student from France will be Canterbury Christ Church University in January till May. She is looking for a place to live. Ideally she is looking for a host family for these few months, to help her improve her English and have closer contact with our culture. She comes from a large family. She says "Of course, I am willing to pay a rent and give services". If you can help please contact the Parish Office.

HCPT CHRISTMAS 2020 GRAND DRAW - to raise funds to pay for a child to go to Lourdes.

Please take a book of tickets to sell at £1 each (10 per book) - available on the table in the Saints Chapel in St Thomas's Church or from anniejudge@hotmail.com or 07866 515797/01227 700553.

MEMORY TREE: You are invited to bring a small label, with the name of a deceased friend or family member, to hang on our Memory Tree. Please put your label in the box provided in the Narthex or, if the church is not open, drop it through the Presbytery Mail Box. The last date for accepting labels is Wednesday, 23rd December at 4pm. All labels will be hung on our Memory Trees at each side of the Crib by volunteers in time for the Christmas Masses.

Parish Carol Service
from 17th December can be watched at:

<https://stthomasofcanterbury.com/portfolio-items/christmas-carol-service/>

CONTACTLESS GIVING / ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

We have contactless giving available in the Parish. From the device in the church, receipts can be sent to you electronically. Try it out to see if it works for you! The office also offers contactless or electronic payments for Mass intentions and other transactions. Please see Linda if this is your preferred payment method of donation. If you donate directly into the Parish Bank account for a Mass donation, please send an explanatory email to Linda in the office - this helps with accurate record keeping.