

Angelus Address for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

The liturgy of this Fourth Sunday of Advent focuses on the figure of Mary, the Virgin Mother, expecting the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Let us fix our gaze upon her, a model of *faith* and of *charity*; and we can ask ourselves: what were her thoughts in the months while she was expecting? The answer comes precisely from today's Gospel passage, the narrative of Mary's visit to her elderly relative Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-45). The Angel Gabriel had revealed that Elizabeth was expecting a son and was already in her sixth month (cf. Lk 1:26, 36). So the Virgin, who had just conceived Jesus by the power of God, set out with haste for Nazareth, in Galilee, to reach the mountains of Judea, and visit her cousin.

The Gospel states: "she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth" (v. 40). Surely she congratulated her on her maternity, as in turn Elizabeth congratulated Mary, saying: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (vv. 42-43). And she immediately lauds Mary's *faith*: "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (v. 45). The contrast is obvious between Mary, who had faith, and Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, who doubted, and did not believe the angel's promise and therefore is left dumb until John's birth. It is a contrast.

This episode helps us to interpret the mystery of man's encounter with God in a very special light. An encounter that is not characterized by astonishing miracles, but rather, is characterized by *faith* and *charity*. Indeed, Mary is blessed because she believed: the encounter with God is the fruit of faith. Zechariah, however, who doubted and did not believe, was left deaf and dumb. To grow in faith during the long silence: without faith one remains inevitably deaf to the consoling voice of God; and incapable of speaking words of consolation and hope to our brothers and sisters. We see it every day: when people who have no faith, or who have very little faith, have to approach a person who is suffering, they speak words suited to the occasion, but they do not manage to touch the heart because they have no strength. They have no strength because they have no faith, and if they have no faith they do not find the words that can touch others' hearts. Faith, in its turn, is nourished by *charity*. The Evangelist recounts that "Mary arose and went with haste" (v. 39) to Elizabeth: with haste, not with distress, not anxiously, but with haste, in peace. "She arose": a gesture full of concern. She could have stayed at home to prepare for the birth of her son, but instead she takes care

of others before herself, showing through her deeds that she is already a disciple of that Lord whom she carries in her womb. The event of Jesus' birth began in this way, with a simple gesture of charity; after all, authentic charity is always the fruit of God's love.

The Gospel passage about Mary's visit to Elizabeth, which we heard at Mass today, prepares us to experience Christmas properly, by communicating to us the dynamism of faith and charity. This dynamism is the work of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of Love who made Mary's virginal womb fruitful and who spurred her to hasten to the service of her elderly relative. A dynamism full of joy, as seen in the encounter between the two mothers, which is entirely a hymn of joyful exultation in the Lord, who does great things with the little ones who trust in him.

May the Virgin Mary obtain for us the grace to experience an 'extroverted' Christmas, but not a scattered one: extroverted. May our 'I' not be at the centre, but rather the 'You' of Jesus and the 'you' of brothers and sisters, especially of those who need a hand. Then we will leave room for the Love that, even today, seeks to become flesh and to come to dwell in our midst.

Pope Francis

Delivered at St Peter's Square on the 23rd December 2018.

Kevin Billington's Funeral

Many of you will have known Kevin Billington, a parishioner at Farm Street Church who died on the 13th December. His funeral will be held at Farm Street Church on Wednesday 22nd December at 11am. *Requiescat in pace*

Malcolm Troup's Funeral

Many of you will also have known Malcolm Troup, a parishioner at Farm Street Church who died on the night of the 8th December. His funeral will be held at Farm Street on Thursday 23rd December at 2pm. *Requiescat in pace*

Parish Prayer List

We pray for those in the parish who are sick: Carmine di Cesare, Marie Carroll Copestake, Michael Gill, Tom Reidy, and Alan Stewart. *The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health. Psalm 41:3*

We also pray the recently departed in the parish: Kevin Billington. Malcolm Troup *Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord.*

NEWSLETTER

JESUIT CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION FARM STREET



Fourth Sunday of Advent 19th December 2021

PARISH CLERGY

*Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, Parish Priest
Fr Nicholas King SJ; Fr Michael Holman SJ*

REGULARLY ASSISTING CLERGY

*Fr Damian Howard SJ; Fr Paul Nicholson SJ
Fr Laco Sulik SJ; Fr Michael Bossy SJ*

PARISH STAFF

*George McCombe, Parish Secretary
Email: farmstreetoffice@rcdow.org.uk*

*Patricia Morgan, Finance Officer
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*David Graham, Director of Music
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*Sebastian Cichocki, Maintenance
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PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

*Steven Fachada,
Email: farmstreetppcchair@rcdow.org.uk*

SAFEGUARDING OFFICE

*Debbie Martin,
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Parish Office

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MASS SCHEDULE

Monday to Friday: 8am, 1.05pm, & 6pm
Saturday: 8am & 6pm
Sunday: 8am, 9.30am (Family), 11am (Latin),
12.30pm, 5.30pm, & 7pm (Young Adult, 18-35)

All Masses can be viewed on our livestreaming page <https://www.farmstreet.org.uk/livestream>

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Monday to Friday: 12 noon to 1pm

CONFESSIONS

Monday to Friday: 12 noon - 1pm
Saturday: 10am to 12 noon; 5.45pm - 6pm
Sunday: Fifteen minutes before every Mass
Also by appointment

BAPTISM AND WEDDINGS

By appointment.

CHURCH OPENING HOURS

Monday to Saturday: 7.30am - 6.30pm
Sunday: 7.30am - 7.00pm

YEAR C

ENTRY

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.

RESPONSE

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

ACCLAMATION

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

COMMUNION

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



NEARLY THERE...

At last, then we're getting there; up to now we haven't used the word "Christmas" though it has been battered to death in the shops since about August. Now, with less than a week of Advent to go, we can use the word; but we must be careful that we understand it correctly. "Christmas" means the mass to celebrate the feast of Christ's incarnation; it does *not* mean a licence to spend money we haven't got on things that we don't really want.

What we might do is to see what the readings for next Sunday are saying to us; they carry a message about who this Jesus is whose birthday we are about to celebrate.

The first reading mentions "Bethlehem", where King David was born, and of course modern readers are well aware that Someone Else was also born in that village. Inevitably, Christian readers relate this reading to Jesus, who is seen as "the one who is to rule over Israel"; and what does it say about him? That he is a shepherd, just like his ancestor David. And of course, in the gospels Jesus is often presented as a shepherd; for example, in John's gospel he is the "Good Shepherd"; or in the other gospels we see Jesus behaving like a shepherd. So we watch as he feeds the crowds, looks out for those on the margins, searches for those who are lost. Then we read that lovely ending: "he himself will be peace".

The psalm uses two images that Christians apply to Jesus; we have "Shepherd" once more, and "Vine". Both pictures come from the Old Testament, but are also right for Jesus. What we have here is the Church inviting us to think about who this Jesus is whose birth we are about to celebrate. A shepherd looks after those who are most in need, while a vine is a symbol of prosperity but also of hard work. These images work powerfully in the culture from which the Old Testament emerges.

The second reading comes from the Letter to the Hebrews; it is not easy reading; the secret is to remember that the whole argument of the epistle is to the effect that "Jesus is the Real Thing". Here the author picks up a familiar Old Testament theme, that just being religious is not sufficient. The key thing is the Jesus is obedient to the Father. Notice in particular the very important phrase: "here I am; I have come to do your will". Can we make that our own today? Finally the gospel tells us more about who Jesus is, and what he is like. He does not say anything or do anything (just as in his passion, which we shall be celebrating in a few months' time.). Here

all the action is on the part of Mary, undertaking a very dangerous and lonely walk when she is probably no older than 12 years. Notice that she "arose" and "went in haste" to the Hill Country of Judah. We observe a slight oddity, that she goes to Zechariah's house; and, rather surprisingly perhaps, that she talks not to him but to his wife! Luke's is the gospel of women, and these two women are very important in the story. The next thing that happens is that the child in Elizabeth's womb gets the message, and "leaps for joy". "Joy" is a very important idea in Luke's gospel, so we know something good is happening. This is confirmed by what Elizabeth says; and if we had not caught the idea, Luke tells us that she, like the rest of her family, and like Jesus, are "filled with the Holy Spirit". You see, God is at work here. So what are we to do? The main thing is first to keep our eyes on Jesus and, second, to be obedient to what the Lord has told us to do. Once again notice that Jesus says nothing and does nothing. There may be something for us to learn here.

What is this Jesus like, do you think, whose birth we are soon going to celebrate?

Fr Nicholas King SJ

Advent Raffle

As we did last year, we shall be holding an online raffle in aid of the Catholic Children's Society and Wateraid. The Catholic Children's Society were extremely grateful for the help that they were able to give destitute families with the £2400 we sent them last year, and have asked us for our help once more. Prizes include vouchers for Restaurant 34 Mayfair and the Royal Albert Hall, Dinner at Delfinos, memberships of art galleries and of the Chelsea Physic Garden. For more information and to buy tickets visit go.rallyup.com/farmstreetaffle2021. The raffle will be drawn on Monday 20th December.

Fr Michael O'Halloran SJ Memorial

A memorial Mass will be celebrated for Fr Michael O'Halloran SJ RIP on Monday 24th January at 6pm. All are welcome to attend.

The Pope's Monthly Prayer Intention

In the month of December, Pope Francis encourages us to pray for catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God. Let us pray that they may be its witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Liturgical Calendar

Sun: Fourth Sunday of Advent
Mon: Advent feria
Tue: Advent feria
Wed: Advent feria
Thu: Advent feria; St John of Kanty, Priest
Fri: Christmas Eve
Sat: Christmas Day
Sun: Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Daily Bible Readings

Sun: Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45
Mon: Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38
Tue: Song of Songs 2:8-14; Luke 1:39-45
Wed: I Samuel 2:1-8; Luke 1:46-56
Thu: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66
Fri: II Samuel 7:1-16; Luke 1:67-79
Sat: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6
Sun: I Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28; I John 3:1-2, 21-24; Luke 2:41-52

London Jesuit Centre

The London Jesuit Centre is a place for the teaching and discussion of theology, the study and practice of the spiritual life, and engagement with issues of social and environmental justice, for the greater glory of God and the common good. It offers a programme of events, courses, and retreats. It is also a centre for individual spiritual direction and training and professional development in spiritual accompaniment. All are welcome to participate in the London Jesuit Centre programme. For more information and to sign up to their mailing list for regular updates on events, please visit <https://londonjesuitcentre.org/>. For more information, contact Anne Paolino at apaolino@jesuit.org.uk.

Churches Together in Westminster

The CTiW 2022 AGM will take place online on Monday, 17th January at 6.30pm. To register, please visit <http://ctiw.london/2021/ctiw-agm-and-talks/>

Sunday Refreshments

Refreshments are served in the Arrupe Hall after the Sunday 9.30am, 11am & 5.30pm Masses (2nd and 4th Sunday only). All are welcome

Face Covering Notice

In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to respect the safety of all, we request that you wear a face covering in the church, unless you are exempt from doing so. Thank you for your cooperation.

Christmas Mass & Service Times

Christmas Eve

(Friday 24th December)

16:00 First Mass of Christmas with carols
 18:00 Mass with Children's Nativity Play
 23.30 Christmas Carols (Doors open 23:00)
 00:00 Midnight Mass with Farm Street Choir

Christmas Day

(Saturday 25th December)

08:00 Mass with carols
 09.30 Family Mass with carols
 11:00 Solemn Latin Mass with choir
 12.30 Mass with carols
 No 6pm Vigil Mass

Boxing Day

(Sunday 26th December)

08:00 Mass
 09.30 Family Mass
 11:00 Solemn Latin Mass
 12.30 Mass
 17:30 Mass

Monday 27th to Friday 31st December

Church opens at 11:00
 12:00 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
 13:05 Mass
 Church closes immediately after Mass

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Saturday 1st January 2022)

Church opens at 11:00
 12:00 Mass (accompanied by piano music)
 Church closes after Mass and re-opens at 5pm
 18:00 Vigil Mass

Sunday 2nd January

As normal

Monday 3rd January

Church opens at 11:00
 12:00 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
 13:05 Mass
 Church closes at 14:00

Tuesday 4th January

Normal schedule resumes

Confessions will be heard as normal with the addition of 5pm-6pm from Monday 20th to Thursday 23rd, Sunday schedule on Christmas Day, and 11am on Saturday 1st January.

Mass intention

If you would like a Mass to be celebrated for a specific intention, please contact the Parish Secretary at farmstreetoffice@rcdow.org.uk