

Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home
4th Sunday of Advent (Year B)
December 20, 2020

“How can this be...?”

– Luke 1:34

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“...nothing will be impossible for God.”

– Luke 1:37

Today’s story from Luke is so familiar to us, so memorialized in great art and Hallmark cards, that its original jolt has been sapped away. Allow yourself to suspend your familiarity and come fresh to this story of Mary’s encounter with the archangel Gabriel.

Be fearful initially. Let your guard down and be perplexed like Mary. Imagine that you are a teenager being asked to give yourself to a commitment that will change the universe, not to mention your life. But above all, in the words of Gabriel: “Be not afraid.”

The inspired early Renaissance painter Blessed Fra Angelico produced various depictions of today’s Gospel story of the Annunciation. Although the 15th-century Dominican artist created significant variations on the same scene, it is said that he never retouched his paintings because, like the iconographers of Eastern Christianity, he believed that he produced them under divine inspiration; thus, they should not be changed.



Fra Angelico’s “Annunciation of Cortona” [a detail of which we are reproducing here] offers a very telling commentary on today’s Gospel about Gabriel’s mission to Mary of Nazareth. It is filled with symbols of sacred history. One striking element is that the artist

linked Mary and the angel by writing the words of their conversation in the space between them!

The angel's declaration that the Holy Spirit will come upon her is straightforward, but her response, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word" is written upside down and backward! Whatever Fra Angelico's intent, that depiction portrays something fundamental about the implications of the human response to God's invitation.

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Prelude: This is the week for the "O Antiphons" that make up the verses of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." Sing along with Richard Smallwood & Vision:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5c4qHt5SBSE>

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

Penitential Act

Lord Jesus, you were promised to Mary by the angel Gabriel:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you entered this world as a surprise:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you come to us who are yearning for your presence:

Lord, have mercy.

Opening Prayer

Eternal God,^{[[[SEP]]]} in the psalms of David,^{[[[SEP]]]} in the words of the prophets,^{[[[SEP]]]}

in the dream of Joseph,^{[[[SEP]]]} your promise is spoken.^{[[[SEP]]]}

At last, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, your Word takes flesh.

Teach us to welcome Jesus, the promised Emmanuel, and to preach the good news of his coming,

that every age may know him^[L]as the source of redemption and grace.

Grant this through him whose coming is certain,^[L]
whose day draws near:^[L] your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,^[L]
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God
forever and ever.

LET THE CHURCH SAY – AMEN.

First, listen to “Mary’s Canticle,” Leon C. Roberts [“My Being Proclaims the Greatness of the Lord”]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gbAjie5yvc>

Then move on to this Sunday’s readings:

Readings for Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B December 20, 2020

1st Reading – 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16

¹ When King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side,

² he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!”

³ Nathan answered the king, “Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you.”

⁴ But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said:

⁵ “Go, tell my servant David, “Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?”

^{8B} “It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel.

⁹ I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth.

¹⁰ I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old.

¹¹ since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you.

¹² And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm.

^{14A} I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.

¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.”

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm – 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

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

² The promises of the LORD I will sing forever;
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.

³ For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”;

in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

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

⁴ “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,

I have sworn to David my servant:

⁵ Forever will I confirm your posterity

and establish your throne for all generations.”

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

²⁷ “He shall say of me, ‘You are my father,

my God, the Rock, my savior.’

²⁹ Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,

and my covenant with him stands firm.”

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

2nd Reading – Romans 16:25-27

Brothers and sisters:
²⁵ To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages

²⁶ but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith,
²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Gospel – Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called

Nazareth,

²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹ "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.

³² He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,

³³ and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

³⁵ And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

³⁶ And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;

³⁷ for nothing will be impossible for God."

³⁸ Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of the Lord.....Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection Prompts:

- When have you experienced God dwelling with you in difficult circumstances?
- When have you felt favored by God?
- Who reveals to you the mysterious presence of God in human flesh?

Meditation Prompts:

The Catholic Church has been singing the "O" Antiphons since at least the eighth century. They are the antiphons that accompany

the *Magnificat* canticle of Evening Prayer from December 17-23. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative "Come!" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah. Here they are:

December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High, ^{[[SEP]]}guiding creation with power and love: ^{[[SEP]]}come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel, ^{[[SEP]]}giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai: ^{[[SEP]]}come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem, ^{[[SEP]]}sign of God's love for all his people: ^{[[SEP]]}come to save us without delay!

December 20

O Key of David, ^{[[SEP]]}opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom: ^{[[SEP]]}come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21

O Radiant Dawn, ^{[[SEP]]}splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: ^{[[SEP]]}come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the ^{[[SEP]]}shadow of death.

December 22

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: ^{[[SEP]]}come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: ^{[[SEP]]}come to save us, Lord our God!

- Select one of these antiphons and let it be the center of your meditations this week.
- Or, pick a different antiphon each time and focus on it during your time of contemplative ease.
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Then move into this week's prayers of the faithful.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS – December 20, 2020
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR B

Presider: Come oh long expected Jesus, and hear our prayers for our groaning world.

Worship Leader

1. For the church and its members: may we be open to God's calling, without knowing what the future may hold. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.** (RESPOND: **O Come, Emmanuel.**)
2. For peace and justice in an unsettled world, and for those called to be peace-makers and prophets. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
3. For those who believe they are too insignificant or unworthy for the Good News to transform their lives. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
4. For all the world's suffering people, especially refugees, who have given up waiting for a new start. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
5. For our Stephen Ministry, its leaders, and all Care Team members and receivers here at Lourdes. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
6. For all who seek healing from substance use disorders and mental health issues, that they find help and mutual support. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
7. For all those who are unemployed or underpaid, that they find the work they seek with a living wage and humane benefits. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
8. For successful launching of the various vaccines and just distribution of them to the most vulnerable. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**

9. For all our loved ones in the military and their families, that they be returned to us safely. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
10. For all those who are separated from us by infirmity, especially for those listed in our bulletin, those afflicted by the corona virus and all who are living with HIV and AIDS, that they know our community's care for them. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
11. For all the dead, that they see God face to face, especially Junior Correll Smith and Phyllis DeJean for whom this Mass is being celebrated. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**
12. Please share any intention you have [PAUSE.....] as well as all our own needs. We pray: **O Come, Emmanuel.**

Presider: God of history, you have done extraordinary things through ordinary people. We ask you to grant us the courage to be open to all that you ask of us as you continue to fulfill your promises. Keep us expectant, so that, like Mary, we may receive Jesus with an open heart. We pray in the name of Jesus. LET THE CHURCH SAY.....AMEN!

Sing or recite "The Lord's Prayer."

Then, behold "Ave Maria" by Schubert & presented by Jessye Norman: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do5ZmQQM8AE>

Closing Prayer

Here in our midst, O God of mystery,
you disclose the secret hidden for countless ages.
For you we wait, for you we listen.
Upon hearing your voice may we, like Mary,
embrace your will and become a dwelling fit for your Word.

Grant this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

LET THE CHURCH SAY – AMEN.

Closing Song

“Prepare Ye (the Way of the Lord),” Kenneth W. Louis
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njSc2bT6VHY>