

GOSPEL REFLECTION FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Final Answer? “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you Do not be afraid, for you have found favour with God.” Imagine for one moment, that instead of the Angel Gabriel speaking those words to Mary, that they had been spoken directly to you. How would you feel? It would of course be a life changing moment ... a moment filled both with great excitement and of great uncertainty. In that moment you would know that life would never be the same again. In that moment you would

know that God had great plans for you. How must Mary have felt? It must have taken huge courage for her to agree to conceive God’s Son. By saying ‘yes’ to God’s plan she was allowing her whole life to be turned upside down. By saying ‘yes’ she was to turn her back on the security of the normal life she had planned with Joseph, her husband-to-be.

God’s call to Mary is what we refer to today as the “Annunciation” which means an announcement or a calling. There are other places in the Bible where we see people called unexpectedly from the normality of their hum-drum lives to serve God. The calling is always a two-way thing. God requires a response. Of course we don’t have to respond to God’s call if we don’t want to. Mary didn’t have to say ‘yes’ to God’s plan. She could have declined and lived out her years in trouble free comfort.

God still calls people today. Sometimes the call is insistent, as many who have been called to religious vocation will testify. Often the call is less obvious, and yet we are told that God has called each of us, and that for each of us there is a role to play. We are favoured and chosen just as Mary was. The main difference is that Mary responded fully to her unique role, whilst we remain hesitant and half-hearted, plagued by doubts as to our worth. Answering God’s call isn’t a comfortable business. Answering God’s call might involve difficult decisions and hardship; but it might also be hugely rewarding, exciting and invigorating. How do we see God’s call? Do we see it as a great burden, or as a great gift? Although Mary was young and uneducated, she had the faith to see that what the Angel Gabriel was offering her in calling her for God was a great gift.

The call is to us all. How does God call each of us? What talents skills and characteristics do we each possess that God can use? Advent is a time in which we can look for the ways in which God is calling us a time in which we can decide on the answer we will give.

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Sunday 24th December 2023 – 4th Sunday of Advent – Year B
 [4th Week of Advent, Weekdays Year II, Psalter Week 4]

MASSSES in the PARISH

Saturday 23rd December		
18.00	<i>First MASS of Sunday</i>	+Eugenia Pilibaitiene
Sunday 24th December		
09.00	MASS	4th Sunday of Advent
11.00	<i>MASS Live streamed</i>	For the People of the Parish
Christmas Eve - THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD – Solemnity with Octave		
18.00	CAROLS for Christmas	
18.30	First MASS of Christmas	+Aiden Ward (GW)
22.30	MASS during the Night	
Monday 25th December – CHRISTMAS DAY		
10.00	MASS during the Day	For the People of the Parish
Tuesday 26th December		
10.30	<i>Altar Servers' MASS</i>	St. Stephen (Martyr) - Feast
Wednesday 27th December		
10.00	MASS	+Anisha Cyriac (CC)
Thursday 28th December		
10.00	MASS & ADORATION	St. John, Apostle, Evangelist - Feast
Friday 29th December - No Mass today		
Saturday 30th December		
18.00	<i>First MASS of Sunday</i>	+Matthew (CC)
Sunday 31st December		
09.00	MASS	Holy Innocents - Feast
11.00	<i>MASS Live streamed</i>	+Mariam (CC)
Friday 29th December - No Mass today		
Saturday 30th December		
18.00	<i>First MASS of Sunday</i>	St Thomas Becket
Sunday 31st December		
09.00	MASS	6th Day within Octave of the Nativity
11.00	<i>MASS Live streamed</i>	Ena Marie Zannit (for healing) (MAE)
Sunday 31st December		
09.00	MASS	The Holy Family
11.00	<i>MASS Live streamed</i>	+Anisha Cyriac (CC)
For the People of the Parish		

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: Thursday after 10.00 Mass and Saturday at 17.30
EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION: Thursday after Mass

For Live Streamed Masses Search for Dereham Catholic Church on YouTube, or use the link on the parish website.

The parish newsletter is available on the parish website from Friday each week.

Anniversaries this week: Dorothy Jones, Frederick Power, Emelienne McClure, Joseph Murphy, Ivy O'Shea, Charlie Secker, Mary Reeder, Charles Wilfred Hunt, Dorothy Pinner. *May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.*

Hospital Visits: If you or any member of your family is admitted to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and would like to have a visit from a Catholic Priest, please inform a nurse on the ward and contact will be made through the Chaplaincy. If you are admitted to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, please contact Fr. Peter Rollings at the Presbytery on 01553 772220. If you would like to receive the Sacrament of the Sick before going into hospital, please contact Fr. Jay either by phone or by email.

Sick & Housebound [with GDPR Permissions] – Please pray for: Shirley Liebenhals, Derek Williams, Patsy Gray, Colette Barrow-Nessian, Betty Reavey, William Dunne, Pauline Buckland, Greta Cummings, Katherine Vella, Pauline Organ, Kevin Pugh, Joy Bussey.

Money Matters: Offering for last Sunday: Plate £286.74 and the collection for the Dependent Priests' Fund amounted to £128.01. Thank you.

Celebrations of the Word and Communion - We shall be having the Eucharistic Service in the Parish every Monday starting on the 13th January at 1000. This offers another rich dimension of our Liturgy.

Parish Events for the week 24 th – 30 th December	
Sunday: 1100	Children's Liturgy is on a Christmas break and resumes on 7 th January.
Tuesday: 1030	Altar Servers' Mass , followed by chess & table tennis tournament, & pizza.
Tuesday: 1900	Youth Club Chess & Table Tennis – No meeting this week.
Thursday: 1730-1830	First Communion Class is on Christmas holiday. Classes resume on 11 th January.
Friday: 1915-2030	Altar Servers' Group is on Christmas holiday. Meetings resume on 12 th January.

For Expectant Mothers - On the Fourth Sunday of Advent we are asked to pray for all who are waiting for a birth of a child. May they be given patience and strength. We are asked to pray for all who work in maternity units and with parents. May they always recognise and cherish the gift of life. We also pray for those who are trying for a child, that they are given courage and that their hope is rewarded.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 2023, BBC Radio 4 at 23.30 - The celebration of the first mass of Christmas will come live from Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King in Liverpool, with the preacher The Most Rev Malcom McMahon, the Archbishop of Liverpool and the choir of the Cathedral and Metropolitan Cathedral Brass Ensemble. The mass setting is Jonathan Dove's *Missa Brevis*

and there'll be favourite Christmas carols including O Come all ye faithful, Silent Night and Hark the herald angels sing. The Director of Music is Christopher McElroy, the organist Richard Lea and the Producer is Miriam Williamson.



For last week's flower decoration, we thank Helen Wood, and the all the members of our Flower Ladies for preparing and decorating the Church for Advent and Christmas, our foodbank regular givers, Mass collection counters, church cleaning team, and the greeters' guild. A big thank you, also, to all who helped to organise and prepare for our parish Christmas party last Thursday, and to everyone who came along to support, and we hope, enjoyed, this social occasion.

Christmas Day - Were you the parent who was asked by your child for a remote-control pink Barbie Corvette at Christmas only to find that every single toy shop on the planet had sold out by the end of November! The tragedy of Christmas is that we are left feeling we have failed as parents, or as a spouse, or as friends, if we have not managed to buy those must-have presents, if we have missed somebody off the card list, or failed to create a Christmas day worthy of a centre fold in Harpers Bizarre. The media has turned Christmas into a frenzy of 'getting things right'. But despite 'consumerism gone mad,' the nativity of Jesus is an event that still grips millions of people. The birth of Jesus heralds a new way of living for each and every new generation, and we are reminded of this significance every year at this time. Yes, the decorations have to come down, but let's remind ourselves to live the Christmas message of giving and caring, each and every day of the year.



Feast of the Holy Innocents, 28th December - The feast of the Holy Innocents recalls the boys aged under two whom Herod killed in order to try and remove Jesus from the scene. This is very much a feast of our time. On this day we also remember those innocent and defenceless children who still suffer today. We remember those children who suffer neglect, and abuse. We remember those children in poorer countries who suffer from hunger, poverty and poor health. We remember those children who are forced to fight or to work long hours for little or no money in hazardous conditions. We remember the children who are victims of war. On this day we remember that every child has a right to love, security, and basic needs.

St. Stephen's Day Tradition, 26th December - St. Stephen's Day, better known to us as Boxing Day, is traditionally celebrated on December 26th. The old custom of giving to the poor is reflected in today's Christmas carol 'Good King Wenceslas' who gave gifts of bread and wine to a poor man on 'the feast of Stephen'. In short Boxing Day is a day of good will to those who are not so well off as we are.



Christmas Crackers!

What do snowmen eat for breakfast? **Snowflakes!**

Who hides in the bakery at Christmas? **A mince spy!**