

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR B) SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER
2020

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

THE NATIVITY STABLE

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Reflecting on the Gospel

Mary (Luke 1: 26-38)

On the last Sunday of Advent the church focuses attention on Mary, the mother of Jesus. On the last Sunday of Advent we are invited to prepare alongside Mary to welcome Jesus afresh into our world on Christmas Day. According to the traditions of both Matthew and Luke, Mary was with child from the Holy Spirit. In Year B, the Gospel reading from Luke explores the conception from Mary's perspective. The news is brought to Mary by the angel Gabriel. Mary's response is positive and direct: 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *the nativity stable*. As Mary prepared for the birth of Jesus, so we prepare our homes and churches by re-enacting the Nativity.

Extracts from the Gospel passage (Luke 1.30-33)

The angel said to her,
'Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favour with God.
And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you will name him Jesus.
He will be great,
and will be called the Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.
He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Gospel prayer

Eternal God,
you called Mary
to be the mother of your Son.
Give us grace this Christmas
to welcome Jesus into our lives;
for you are our God.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Luke 1: 26-38

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, '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 holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

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ENGAGING WITH THE THEME AT HOME

Reflecting and meditating

Reflect on Luke's account of the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1: 26-38):

- what details in the passage catch your attention?
- what big ideas does the passage spark in your mind?
- what most touches your heart in the passage?
- what most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage?

Thinking and talking

- what do you understand by the angel Gabriel?
- what do you make of Gabriel's message?
- what do you make of Mary's response?
- how do you interpret the work of the Holy Spirit?
- how can we best understand the narrative for today?

Using your Bible

Following on from Luke's account of the annunciation, to Mary's encounter with Elisabeth:

- Luke 1: 39-56

Explore passages in the Old Testament that illuminate the annunciation:

- Psalm 89: 3-4
- Psalm 132: 10-12
- Genesis 18: 13-14
- Isaiah 7: 14
- Isaiah 9: 6-7

Exploring online

- explore classical images of the Annunciation
- explore Christmas stable scenes
- explore making the Christmas stable

Drawing on experience

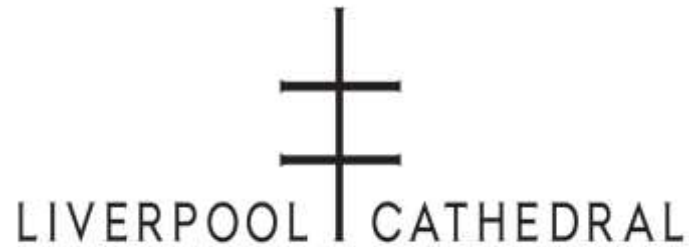
- reflect on your experiences of seeing Christmas stables
- reflect on your experiences of Nativity plays
- reflect on your experiences of homelessness and inequality

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Creating and making

- create a collage of images of the Annunciation
- make a Nativity stable
- make a poster of Nativity stable scenes
- create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the Annunciation and preparation for Christ's Nativity

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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