

**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**

Psalm 88

Response:

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

- 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.)
- "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.)

- 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

**THE WORD**

# 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. ■

**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. ■

**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.