

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Fourth Sunday of Advent: 20th December 2020

Collect:

Eternal God, as Mary waited for the birth of your Son, so we wait for his coming in glory; bring us through the birth pangs of this present age to see, with her, our great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



The Magnificat

And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their

hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

A reading from the letter to the Romans (16.25-end)

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (1.26-38)

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 forever, 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.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection:

I would like to invite you to spend a moment or two concentrating on your favourite picture of Mary the Mother of Jesus. It might be of a statue in the church where you grew up, or of a Christmas card you have recently received, or perhaps a representation from one of the classical 'Old Masters'. Take your time to bring it in focus in your minds eye, then hold it there for a moment. Then file it away for future use. Now try to do the same with a picture you may have seen on

Television, in the press or on line, of a modern mother from a middle-eastern country. Again, if you can hold it for a few moments, then file it away for later use.

Mary the person.

Most of what we know about Mary comes to us from St. Luke's Gospel. (He it is who gives us: The betrothal to Joseph; the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel; the visit to Elizabeth (and the Magnificat); the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus and the manger cradle; the revelation to the shepherds and their visit to the manger; the visit to the temple for the circumcision of Jesus and Simeon's prophecy to Mary (and the Nunc Dimittis); the visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve, with its consequences, after which Luke tells us that 'Mary treasured all these things in her heart'.)

Perhaps it is the fact that Luke, who seems to have come to Christian faith through the ministry of Paul, is Greek with an enquiring mind which leads him to research the origins of Jesus more fully than the other Gospel writers, and it is possible that he visited Palestine with Paul, and may have had the chance to talk to Mary, which enables him to tell us so much about her and her relationship with Jesus.

Mary in Tradition

Now go back to your image of Mary which you hopefully filed away at the start. Often in western art, Mary has been depicted as a white, middle class rather docile figure who wouldn't say boo to a goose – is that your image? Then look again at Luke's picture of her. Girls were usually betrothed in their teens in those days, almost certainly olive skinned with dark hair, she was a girl of her time, probably doing her parent's bidding. Perhaps as a teen anger, somewhat given to being a bit dreamy, so she may not have been unduly surprised by the angel Gabriel's visit, but his message and the implications would have come as a shock. And here we begin to see something of the strength of the girl, no hysterics are recorded, no great drama, but a simple waiting on God, to hear the rest of the message, then the one question ' How can this be'. She would probably have been familiar with the idea of God's Holy Spirit, for that spirit brooded over the waters at creation in the Jewish scriptures but the idea that the same Spirit would come to her must have been an amazing thought. We don't know how her immediate family would have taken it, but we get a hint in St. Matthew's Gospel, where we are told Joseph thought about divorcing her, but after a dream, decided not to do so. Luke tells us that instead she goes to stay with her aunt/cousin in the hill country for about three months.

Mary and our time.

Now, please return to your image of a modern middle eastern mother. In all probability Mary looked more like her than our beloved church images, and at a time when we have become concerned about diversity, that is rather important to remember. Many modern middle eastern mothers are strong women doing their best to keep their family together in the most difficult circumstances. They are not strong in the sense of being loud, self opinionated or 'brassy', but they are strong in the sense of being able to hold on against all the odds. They are strong in love, in courage, and in commitment to those who depend on them. And such was Mary the Mother of Jesus. A 70mile journey on the back of a donkey when heavily pregnant is no jolly day out! Having a manger as a cradle for your firstborn is no one's dream nursery. Leaving everything and becoming a refugee with a toddler in a foreign country is not for the faint hearted. This was Mary's early married life and that she came though it with flying colours shows how strong she was.

But.... Her greatest strength, which still challenges all of us today, was her ability to recognise a message from God, and to say Yes to Him, without knowing where it might lead. So as we think of her in these coming days, let us pray for just a smidgeon of her courage and faith, so that we too may be able to say YES when he calls.

- Canon Chris

God is love. Those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
who mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel.*

O come, thou rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice, rejoice...

O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice...

O come, thou key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice...

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes on Sinai's hight
In ancient times didst give the Law,
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice, rejoice...

For Our Prayers:

The Bishops are calling on every parish to join them using this prayer at home and at every act of worship for our church, that we grow in trust in God's providence and deepen our own generosity giving of ourselves and of our gifts.

**Loving God,
you are always with us,
and give us all we need to be your church
in Suffolk.**

**Help us, we pray, to give as we have received:
abundantly, generously, and joyfully,
that our worship and our service
may bear witness to your Kingdom of
unfailing love.**

**In the name of your Son
who gave himself for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dicker-
son, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele,
Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Saman-
tha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily,
Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Jean Dominy, Leslie
Bloomfield, Katie (cancer), Alice (Joan's grandson's
wife), Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky &
Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Alice, Lee Grigs

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and
around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due
to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have
lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved.
For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for
honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For
refugees across the world & diplomats and peace
makers, working to end conflicts

**Those who have recently died, and their families
mourning their loss:** Pearl Leggett RIP.

Call this number —> for free.

It's a lovely way to worship from home!

0800 804 8044
DailyHOPE

Notices:

Rev Canon Jutta's last Sunday: Jutta's last service at St Thomas will be *Sunday 3rd January*. This service will need to be booked into as usual, so we will do our best to accommodate as many people as possible while remaining safe. You will also be able to join the service on Zoom or livestreamed on facebook.

No need to book on Sunday 27th Dec - Kat Baker who runs our booking system needs a Christmas break! So on the 27th you can just turn up to church.

No Eucharist service on Wednesday 30th Dec.

No Church Opening for private prayer on Thurs 24th, Monday 28th, and Thurs 31st. Church opening will restart on Monday 4th Jan.

Alpha: Zoom Alpha starts on 7th January! It will run on Thursday evenings 7-9pm. **Please email Rev Cat to sign up.** We know the best way to get people to come is for us to invite them personally, so please, *invite your friends, family, and neighbours*, and why not give it a go yourself!

Prayer! We want our church to grow, so please join in this prayer at home: "*God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*"

To book by phone for Sunday services, call **01473 742973** in the week before the service, leaving your name, how many you are booking for, and your phone number.

This Week:

Sunday, 20th December

10am Eucharist: in-person worship with Zoom and livestream available

6pm Zoom Carols by candlelight: a chance to sing your heart out at home!

Tuesday 22nd December

6pm Meditation Group livestream on [Facebook/StThomasPilgrimCommunity](#)

Wednesday 23rd December

10am Eucharist, no need to book. Also livestreamed on [Facebook/StThomasIpswich](#)

Please see last week's sheet for Christmas Services

Church website:

<http://sthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>



St Thomas
Pilgrim Community

are continuing after Canon Jutta has left. They are holding their Second Commitment Service with Bishop Mike on 10th January at 4pm –either in Church or on ZOOM (tbd). Please, keep them in your prayers. For more information, see Jutta or Malcolm.

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Julie & Mark Stevens; Rosemary Suggate; Shirley Vivian; Angela Waldridge; Brian & Joy Ward; Audrey West; Natacha & Amber Wilcox; Pat and Jan Wright



Birthdays this week:

20th: Angela Waldridge, Jan Wright

26th: Bradley Knight, Naomi Bloomfield

Contacts:

Priest in charge: Canon Jutta Brueck m:07958 360564

Email: jutta.brueck@cofesuffolk.org

Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

Assistant Curate: Revd Cat Connolly m: 07530 412988

Email: revcatconnolly@gmail.com

Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO

m: 07961 859344 Email: sussexsi@aol.com

Church wardens: Roger Elmer m:07810 274586

Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

Mary Bullass 625135

Gloria Elmer 745590

Rev Jackie 07962 172639

Revd Pat 464748