

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Focus

A candle next to a piece of baby clothing or a toy.

Introduction

So often when a story is familiar to us it loses some of its impact. When we read a book or watch a film for the second time, somehow it doesn't quite impress us in the same way as when the story was fresh and full of surprises. This may be true of today's Gospel, which is so familiar that all too easily we can lose sight of the awesome and amazing story of God becoming human. Such an amazing event took place in an ordinary town with a simple young girl who had been uniquely blessed by God and chosen by him to be the mother of his Son.

Gospel Acclamation

Light the Gospel candle and sing the Advent Acclamation:

He'll be coming back in glory when he comes,
he'll be coming back in glory when he comes,
God is speaking to us now,
let him show us how,
fill our hearts with love as he comes.
(To the tune of 'She'll be coming round the mountain')

Gospel

A reading from the Gospel of St Luke (1:26-38)
(See page 378.)

Reflection

God wanted a willing volunteer to bear his Son and care for him. Whom did he choose to ask?

Mary.

Where did Mary live at the time?

Mary lived in a village called Nazareth, in a sheltered valley in the hills of the northern province of Galilee.

Who appeared to Mary and told her of God's plans?

An angel called Gabriel was sent by God to bring this very important message.

What do we call the announcement made by Gabriel that Mary would give birth to 'the Son of the Most High'?

We call this moment 'the Annunciation', which simply means 'the announcing'.

What was Mary's reaction to the angel's words?

At first she could not understand how everything Gabriel had told her could come about. But Mary had been specially chosen by God and was filled with the gift of his grace and goodness. Her complete faith and trust in God allowed her to agree and say 'yes' to whatever plans God had in mind for her. Mary would conceive and give birth to God's beloved Son.

What other marvellous news did Gabriel share with Mary?

The angel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was expecting a baby after years and years of being unable to have a child. Although Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah had accepted that they would remain childless, 'nothing is impossible for God'!

Do you know the name of the child Elizabeth would have? Elizabeth gave birth to a son and called him John. When he grew up he became known as John the Baptist! The wonders surrounding the birth of John the Baptist prepare us for the wonders surrounding the birth of Jesus. Gabriel's 'annunciation' to Mary links the future of these unborn children in God's ultimate plan for his people's salvation

Activity

Help each child to create an angel! Using a coloured pen or pencil, draw around your hand to make an upside-down angel's body. Using a different colour this time, trace around one hand and then the other, placing them slightly lower down to create the angel's wings. Turn the paper around and colour in the outline of the angel's body, adding outstretched arms and a face and halo. Either colour the wings or add some glue and sprinkle them with glitter.

Intercessions

As brothers and sisters in one loving family, together let us pray to our heavenly Father:

We bring to God's love the family gathered here today and our brothers and sisters all over the world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring to God's love the homeless, the poor and the unloved.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring to God's love those who need to forgive or to be forgiven.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring to God's love those who are sick or suffering at home or in hospital.

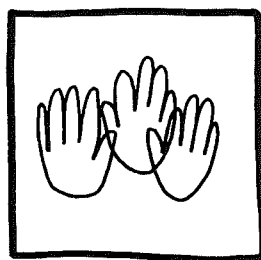
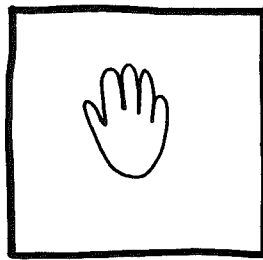
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Knowing that our heavenly Father is listening, in the silence of our hearts let us share our own unspoken prayers with him.

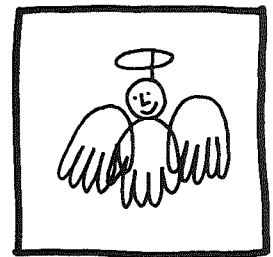
Silence

Loving Father,
listen to our prayers for one another.
Help us to accept your holy will
and say 'yes' to whatever you ask us to do
in our daily lives.
Grant this through Jesus our Lord.

Amen.



Add a face, halo and glitter!



Turn the page around.

Use aluminium foil rolled up for the halo.

Use wool or yarn for hair.



Add glitter or feathers to the wings.