

Sunday 20th December 2020 (Advent 4) Fr. Mike

- Canticle – Magnificat
- 2 Samuel 7.1-11,16
- Romans 16.25-27
- Luke 1.26-38

After reading the above scripture, please listen to ‘Gaudete’ (kindly recorded in our church for us by vocalists from Newcastle University) and then read on...

Gaudete

**Gaudete, Gaudete!
Christus et natus
Ex maria virgine,
Gaudete!**

**Rejoice, Rejoice!
Christ is born
Of the virgin Mary,
Rejoice!**

**Tempus ad est gratiae,
Hoc quod optabamus;
Carmina laetitiae,
Devote redamus.**

**It is now the time of grace
That we have desired;
Let us sing songs of joy,
Let us give devotion.**

**Deus homo factus est,
Natura mirante;
Mundus renovatus est
A Christo regnante.**

**God was made man,
And nature marvels;
The world was renewed
By Christ who is King.**

**Ezechiellis porta
Clausa pertransitur;
Unde lux est orta
Salus invenitur.**

**The closed gate of Ezechiel
Has been passed through;
From where the light rises
Salvation is found.**

**Ergo nostra cantio,
Psallat iam in lustris;
Benedicat Domino:
Salus Regi nostro.**

**Therefore let our assembly now sing,
Sing the Psalms to purify us;
Let it praise the Lord:
Greetings to our King.**

‘For with God, nothing shall be impossible’ (Luke 1.37)

Fortunately, there is a rich fabric of prayer within the Universal Church. This very fact helps us to be both resilient and resourceful as individuals and as a community of faith – particularly in challenging times. ‘Magnificat’ is one such prayer - a beautiful and timeless

canticle (traditionally said or sung at Evening Prayer/Evensong) beginning with the words:

'My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded : the lowliness of his handmaiden.'

Today, Luke reminds us of the unique message delivered to Mary some 2,020 years ago, the honest conversation that took place between Gabriel and that same bewildered, lowly 'handmaiden' (soon to become the mother of God) and of her remarkably positive reply:

'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.'

She simply said 'yes' to God ... Just as Nathan the prophet suggested to King David **'Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee' (v.3)**; faithful obedience duly establishing the throne of David forever.

Another famous prayer of devotion is the **'Angelus Prayer'** designed to be said three times each day: at dawn, noon, and dusk. The original author is understood to be Benedetto Sinigardi (1190-1282). Based on the message from angel Gabriel to Mary – the 'Annunciation' that announced the plan God had for her life. This is a unique prayer to fit a unique message. It succinctly attempts to bring our minds and hearts to Christ in a way that punctuates our day. Originally this prayer was a way for workers to pray towards the end of their long working day. It would often coincide with the monks praying Evening Prayer, or Compline. Perhaps this is something you might like to try in your prayer life?

Although we are called to be childlike – we often prefer to take control of our lives, but sadly the net result of this need to be in control is that we can sometimes end up without either peace or joy.

Is there a prayerful antidote for our stubbornness?

This pivotal moment in world history, where Mary said ‘yes’ and subsequently triggered Christ’s saving work for all humanity, is key to our Christian faith - a faith of obedience and simplicity. The Angelus reflects this, helping us to retain the first principles of our faith – particularly during this pandemic. In a world which is often busy, with many daily duties and challenges, it is so easy to forget about God altogether. This ecumenical prayer is simply a short daily reminder, enabling us to call to mind God’s love for us in a way that is realistic, potent and most of all – sincere because it has as its focus the very moment where “[the Word became flesh and dwelt among us](#)” (the Incarnation). By recounting the message delivered by Gabriel we also see and imitate Mary’s example of openness to the will of God. Being reminded of this special moment of salvation history, whenever we choose to pray it, can provide us with strength and nurture.

Conclusions

Many treasures are to be found within a broad spectrum of Christian traditions. All of which are equally valid and freely available to all. Indeed, anything which liberates us from our tendency to be self-absorbed, provides a clear structure, and points us towards God at least once per day can surely only be a good thing, irrespective of its historical root?

The Angelus is clearly biblical in character, can briefly sanctify different moments of our day, and because it reminds us of the Paschal Mystery, by recalling the Incarnation of the Son of God, we are praying to be led through his Passion and Cross, to the glory of his Resurrection. This is a fundamental journey for all Christians, requiring tenacity and humility.

As the current pandemic prevents us from receiving the Holy Sacrament in both kinds for our comfort, I warmly commend this little Angelus prayer to help sustain you.

As St. Paul sums up - **'To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.'** (Rom.16.27).

Fr. Mike (20th December 2020 – Advent 4)

The Angelus

The angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary:

And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus, Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:

Be it unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace &c.

And the Word was made flesh:

And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, full of grace &c.

Pray for us, holy Mother of God:

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

POUR forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.