

First Reading: Micah 5:1-4
Response: “*God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine us and we shall be saved*” (Ps.79:4)
Responsorial Psalm: Ps.79:2-3,15-16,18-19.
Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10
Gospel: Luke 1:39-44.

Jesus today, as Risen Lord, since the moment of his incarnation, came to be with us. When in Mary's womb he visited the Baptist. From Elizabeth's womb, the Baptist and the Baptist leapt for joy. Jesus, from conception, came to love and serve others.

The Messiah comes, not from those with power and wealth in Jerusalem, but from the little town of “*Bethlehem Ephrathah, least of the clans of Judah*” (Mic.5:1). For “*out of you will be born the one who is to rule Israel*” (Mic.5:2).

The Messiah King, will shepherd his people. “*He will stand and feed his flock*” (Mic.5:3). “*And he himself will be peace*” (Mic.5:4). He whom the heavens cannot contain will be borne in a humble womb. Big things come in small packages.

With faith and hope, the people look to God to save them from destruction. He is the “*Shepherd of Israel*” (Ps. 79:1). He will guard his flock and the people know he will “*visit this vine and protect it*” (Ps.79:15).

God's people long for the day of salvation. “*God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine us and we shall be saved*” (Ps.79:4). The psalm repeats itself: “*God of hosts turn again we implore*” (Ps.79:15). And God turns to us. Do we turn to him?

Turning to God means doing his will. As Son of God, Christ expresses the will of God. As he is God's word to us, so is he our perfect response to God. “*Here I am! I am coming to obey your will*” (Heb.10:9).

In spite of our sacrifices according to the law, we now have the perfect sacrifice in Jesus Christ, “*the offering of his body made once and for all*” (Heb.10:10).

Salvation from God, *Jeshu'ah*, involves our commitment. The Word became flesh with Mary's cooperation. Pregnant Mary brings Christ in her womb to pregnant Elizabeth who when she heard Mary's greeting, “*the child leapt in her womb*” (Lk.1:41).

Elizabeth cries out “*Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord*” (Lk.1:43) and praises the mother of all believers. “*Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled*” (Lk.1:44).

Read the **Gospel** and see how the Holy Spirit works with Mary for the Incarnation of Christ.

In the **Eucharist**, is the *Epiklesis*, when Holy Spirit comes down to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

Study the **Teaching** of the Church with regards to the Incarnation and how the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

Take Mary as our model in being open to the Holy Spirit and let the action of God work in our lives. (**Witness**)

FOR THE CHILDREN

Read and discuss with the children the Gospel of the day. Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth.

In worship (Liturgy), we say the Creed where the action of the Spirit in Mary is mentioned.

In the 'Apostles' Creed' we pray: "**He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.**"

Children should learn the 'Apostles' Creed.'

FOR TEENAGERS (*Christian Praxis*)

Name the Present Action: *What is your understanding of the Incarnation?*

Your Story and Vision: *What does it mean to you and what should it mean?*

Church's Story and Vision: *Here the teacher gives the teaching on the Incarnation.*

Yours and Church's Vision: The Kingdom of God is the continuation of the Incarnation in us. Christ living in his people, his body, the Church.

RCIA

During Advent we see Mary pregnant. We prepare for the coming of the Lord, the birth of her child. We know the child is born on Christmas day and we celebrate the moment. Christ is Mary's child and he wants us to be children of Mary too. Being Mary's child means living like Christ.

LIFE EXPERIENCE

Mary was a young, insignificant female in her time, yet God considered her most important in creation. This truth struck me deeply when I visited a Mater Dei home that assists young unmarried pregnant girls. Some were saved from aborting their babies. How appropriate it is for these homes to operate under the titles of our Mother. She knows what it is like for a young girl, uncertain of her future, to be pregnant. She knows the mystery of life, human and divine. If *Jeshu'ah* was aborted there would have been no salvation. *Jeshuah* (Jesus) means salvation. Mary, new Eve, mother of Jesus, is mother of every child and she is ever grateful for helping her save her children. This is an important work in the Church and we are the Church. Cardinal Hume said that as bishop his main responsibility is the care of the people.⁽ⁱ⁾ The Mater Dei homes are such a commitment of our local bishop and Church where young people are faced with decisions about the life and death of their babies.

(i) HUME Basil. "*Footprints of the Northern Saints*". Darton, Longman & Todd. London. 1988. p.59.

LITTLE ANGELINA

Angelina was quite surprised that her little friend from across the road did not know the "Hail Mary." The words are simple and biblical. Children breathe the air, atmosphere that the family creates. Angelina's little friend came from a Pentecostal background. Angelina showed her a picture of the Blessed Virgin, on the wall. "That's not our house," said her friend. "Well, she is here," replied Angelina, "And part of the family," added her mother. Angelina's friend will breathe a different air, atmosphere in her home. Angelina certainly introduced her to a new member in Angelina's family and I think she likes it. After all Mary's story is about the Holy Spirit and Pentecostals look to the Holy Spirit. In fact our lives should also be stories about the Holy Spirit; and Mary is our model.

IMPORTANT WORD: "**Mary's greeting**" (*Lk. 1:44*)

At Mary's greeting, Elizabeth senses new life in the Spirit with the child in her womb and proclaims what is happening to her. She extols the blessedness of Mary and the fruit of her womb. In Mary is the promise of the Lord fulfilled (*Lk. 1:44*). She is with her Son wherever she goes, two thousand years ago and today. She brings us to the Lord and brings the Lord to us, as should every Christian. Jesus says: "**This is your mother**" (*Jn. 19:27*), "**and the disciple took her home as his own mother**" (*ibid.*). Such is a true disciple and apostolic action in the bible. The Church, Body of Christ, sees Mary as its Mother and honours her as such. The ancient sage, Confucius, says: *They who know the truth are not equal to those who love it.*⁽ⁱ⁾

(i) K'UNG FU-TSU (*CONFUCIUS*). "*The Analects*". 6-20. NuVision Publications, LLC. USA. 2007. p. xxix.

Watchword: “*Of all women you are the most blessed*” (Lk. 1:42)

Hebrew: בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ בְּנָשִׁים Beruchah ‘atte banashim.
Greek: Εὐλογημένη σου ἐν γυναῖξιν. Eulogemene su en gunaiksin.
Latin: **Benedicta tu inter mulieres.**
Spanish: **Bendita tu entre las mujeres.**
Portuguese: **Bendita es tu entre as mulheres.**
French: **Dieu t’a bénie plus que toutes les femmes.**
German: **Gepriesen bist du unter den Frauen.**
Afrikaans: **Geseënd is jy onder die vroue.**
Zulu: **Ubusisiwe wena esifazaneni.**
Xhosa: **Ungoyena usikelelweyo wena phakathi kwabafazi.**
Sotho: **O lehlohonolo hara basadi.**
Gaelic (Irish): **Is beannachadh thú idir mná.**