

# 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.**

**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.**

1. 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.)
2. "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.)

3. 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*

# Our Lady & St Edmund of Abingdon

## 1 Radley Rd, Abingdon on Thames, Oxon, OX14 3PL

We are a *LiveSimply* parish aiming to live Simply, Sustainably and in Solidarity with the Poor

Parish Priest: Fr. Jamie McGrath Tel: 01235 520375  
Parish Secretary: Lisa Paterson Tel: 01235 520375  
Office Hours: 10.30am-12.30pm Tuesday to Friday  
Office Email: abingdon@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk  
*We live stream all services*  
Safeguarding Team: Tel. 07572 935 230  
Visits at JR Hospital: Priest/Chaplain 01865 221732  
Visits and Help: Society of Vincent de Paul Group, contact via Parish Office  
Parish Website: [www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk](http://www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk)  
Primary School: St. Edmund's School, Radley Road, Abingdon, OX14 3PP Tel 521558



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Reg. Charity No 246871

[www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

### PARISH OFFICE OPENING HOURS:

Please note that during this second period of lockdown, and until further notice, the Parish Office opening hours will be from **Tuesdays to Fridays from 10.30am to 12.30pm**. Outside of these times, Fr Jamie will respond to urgent phone messages as soon as he can. Note that the office will be closed from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> December and 31<sup>st</sup> December to 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

### PRIVATE PRAYER

We are blessed that the church can be open, but for **private prayer only**, on the following days and times:

- ✠ **Tuesdays: 12pm to 1pm**
- ✠ **Thursdays: 7.30am to 8.30am (during Advent)**
- ✠ **Fridays: 12pm to 1pm**

### MASS BOOKINGS:

**On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December you can book for Masses from Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> Dec. to Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan.**

**Please note that the Mass on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January will be at midday and not at 7pm.**

**PLEASE remember to give as many dates and times when you could attend - otherwise you may be disappointed.**

### CONFESSIONS

By appointment only for now. Please contact the parish office to book an appointment.

## HOW TO BOOK FOR MASS

### No Internet Access?

Phone **07395 946827** EACH MONDAY between 10am and 11am ONLY to book a place for the FOLLOWING week

### Have Internet Access?

**DON'T phone. Instead, email: [contact@ourladyandstedmund.org.uk](mailto:contact@ourladyandstedmund.org.uk) EACH MONDAY, to book a place for the FOLLOWING week**

### Week 4 of Advent (Year B)

**Attendance through booking system only, but also available on our live stream**

**Sunday 20 December 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
10.15am Mass (Peggy & John Anderson, RIP)  
6.30pm Mass (Private intention)  
2.00pm Polish Mass

**Monday 21 December**  
9am Mass (Steve Bevan, RIP)

**Tuesday 22 December**  
NO Mass See: [www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/english-martyrs-vale-of-white-horse](http://www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/english-martyrs-vale-of-white-horse) for other masses

**Wednesday 23 December**  
7pm Mass (John Stephen Brady, RIP)

**Thursday 24 December The Nativity of the Lord**  
8.00pm Vigil Mass (Sheila Finch, RIP)

**Friday 25 December The Nativity of the Lord**  
8.30am Mass (Geoff Wyatt, RIP)  
10.15am Mass (Sheila Delany, RIP)  
12pm Mass (Wallace Ellwood, RIP)

**Saturday 26 December St Stephen**  
12pm Mass (Frances Blome, RIP)



### SPIRITUAL COMMUNION PRAYER:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot today receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there, and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.



## CHRISTMAS OFFERING

This Christmas, we give thanks to Fr Jamie for all the dedication, guidance and care which he has given to our parish. Our Clergy Christmas offering supports Fr Jamie in his vocation and mission - bringing people closer to Jesus Christ, through His Church. We ask you to be generous, especially since there was no similar offering this year at Easter. These have indeed been difficult times! Any offerings left in the church from Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December to Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January will go towards this. **You can also make your donations online on our website home page from Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December – and gift aid it.** If you cannot access the Internet, you can leave your offering in the church using your green envelopes (if you have them) or in any envelope clearly marked 'Christmas Offering'. Thank you for your generosity.

*Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)*

## NEWSLETTERS

Please note that there will be no newsletter until after the new year. However, the *Sunday Message* will still be available on our website.

## RIGHT TO LIFE UK

The assisted suicide lobby have launched a large campaign to put pressure on the Government to reconsider the legalisation of assisted suicide. It is vital that it is clear to the Government that the public want them to continue to hold strong against this pressure from assisted suicide campaigners and reject their demands. *Right To Life UK* have set up an easy to use tool which will enable you to email your MP asking them to make it clear to the Government that it should not give in to demands from the assisted suicide lobby to reconsider the legalisation of assisted suicide. It only takes 30 seconds to email your MP or by visiting this website:  
<https://righttolife.org.uk/StopAssistedSuicide>

## YEAR OF ST JOSEPH

Pope Francis has announced a "Year of Saint Joseph" to run until 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021, to mark the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being proclaimed the Patron of the Universal Church. The prayer below was written by the Holy Father.

**Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,  
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

**To you God entrusted his only Son;  
in you Mary placed her trust;  
with you Christ became man.**

**Blessed Joseph, to us too,  
show yourself a father  
and guide us in the path of life.**

**Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,  
and defend us from every evil. Amen**

## SURVEY OF PEOPLE & PARISHIONERS

The Diocese want to understand better what you the people and parishioners of our Diocese think **and** what you consider is important as we journey **in** faith together. This will help us all to develop plans and priorities for the Diocese so that we can truly be faithful missionary people in a flourishing and vibrant Diocese that brings the joy and hope of the Gospel message to our communities and the wider world. The online questionnaire will run over Christmas and into the New Year and a link is available on the News page of our website. A paper version is also available for those unable to access the digital version: leave a message with name and address for Chris Smith the Diocesan Director of Communications on 02394 216496.

## ADVENT

We begin the final week of Advent this Sunday. The period of waiting is almost over, but we should continue to prepare ourselves spiritually.

**On our parish website, you can follow Advent reflections on the Advent calendar on our Home page and the videos on the Advent page of the What's On section. There are also activities for children in the Youth section.**



### A Christmas Blessing

May you be filled with the wonder  
of Mary,  
the obedience of Joseph,  
the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the determination of the magi,  
and the peace of the Christ child.

Almighty God, Father,  
Son and Holy Spirit  
bless us now  
and forever.

Amen



*Wishing all our Parish of  
Our Lady & St Edmund,  
a blessed and peaceful Christmas.*

*Fr Jamie*