

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

He himself will be peace.

First Reading

Let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

Psalm

Here I am! I am coming to obey your will.

Second Reading

Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Gospel

Father, all-powerful God,
your eternal Word took flesh on our earth
when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan.

Lift our minds in watchful hope
to hear the voice which announces his glory
and open our minds to receive the Spirit
who prepares us for his coming. *Old Opening Prayer*

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Micah 5: 1-4; Psalm 79 (80); Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1: 39-44

Claudia Williams, *The Visitation* (1973), St Beuno's



'Why
should I be
honoured
with a visit
from the
mother of
my Lord?'

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Fourth Sunday of Advent
Year C
19th December 2021

"Blessed is the fruit
of your womb!"

Christ is coming! The readings this weekend are full of an expectation. God's promise through Micah is fulfilled in the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth, and their faith.

In the **First Reading**, Micah proclaims that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem and lead his flock back to their land in peace.

The **Psalm** is a plea to the Shepherd of Israel for this return, and for the sending of the Messiah, the chosen one.

The **Second Reading** from the Letter to the Hebrews emphasizes the fact that the Christ who redeemed us took on a human body, like ours.

The **Gospel** helps us gather all these themes: obedience to God's will; faith in his promises; and especially faith in the Incarnation – Jesus our Saviour, already becoming flesh in Mary's womb.

May we journey through these last days of Advent in Mary's company, so that Christ may be born in us.

Opening Prayer

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.

First Reading Micah 5: 1–4

The Lord says this:
You, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
the least of the clans of Judah,
out of you will be born for me
the one who is to rule over Israel;
his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old.
The Lord is therefore going to abandon them
till the time when she who is to give birth gives birth.
Then the remnant of his brothers will come back
to the sons of Israel.
He will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord,
with the majesty of the name of his God.
They will live secure, for from them on he will extend his power
to the ends of the land.
He himself will be peace.

I come to my place of prayer. How do I feel at the moment?
Maybe, despite all good intentions, I find myself caught up in the season's
frenzy. I take a deep breath and offer this time, however short, to the
Lord. I rest in him.
When I choose, I read the Micah text slowly, a couple of times.
What strikes me in this prophecy, this promise?
Is it Bethlehem, a small town of the least important tribe?
How have I seen God's work in the smallest and least?
Or is it perhaps that God works slowly ... his plan takes time to develop,
and involves suffering and exile?
How is this true for me?
Or perhaps I hold on to the promise of the one still to be born?
What is he for me— the shepherd, the powerful and majestic king,
or the prince of peace?
What is my image of the Messiah?
I speak to the Lord.
Maybe I ask him for the grace to live these last few days in patient
waiting, remembering in prayer all those who wait in suffering.
I close my prayer with a 'Hail Mary' or another prayer of my choice.

Gospel Luke 1: 39–44

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the
hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and
greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's
greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with
the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women you
are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why
should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?
For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my
womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the
promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

As I prepare to pray, I give time to slowly becoming aware of my body.
I relax and breathe gently. I allow the conviction of God's presence, in
and around me, to flood my being. I ask the Spirit to pray within me.
When I'm ready, I take up the text and read it slowly a couple of times.
At one level, it is the simple meeting of two pregnant women.
I imagine the scene and quietly watch it unfolding before me.
What strikes me most about what I see? And why is that?
I look at Elizabeth, see the thrill on her face as her baby moves within her;
her joy at meeting Mary; her spiritual insight in seeing her cousin as the
'mother of her Lord'.
Do I find small echoes of any of this in my life?
I consider Mary, arriving to help with the ordinary chores of life, but
caught up in a unique moment of blessedness.
How does this speak to me?
I ponder the deep bond between the two women: their joy, their pride in
carrying their precious children, but also their humility, and their
consciousness of touching the divine in all their humanity.
I may see this encounter as a contemplative moment.
I remain silent before them.
I speak to the Lord, expressing how I feel.
I pray for all pregnant women as I end my prayer.