

Sunday 21 December – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Collect

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him
when he comes again as our judge;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-16

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”

But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”

Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.”

Psalm 80:1-8, 18-20

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, ♦
you that led Joseph like a flock;

Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim, ♦
before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your mighty strength ♦
and come to our salvation.

*Turn us again, O God; ♦
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.*

O Lord God of hosts, ♦
how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?

You feed them with the bread of tears; ♦
you give them abundance of tears to drink.

You have made us the derision of our neighbours, ♦
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

*Turn us again, O God of hosts; ♦
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.*

Let your hand be upon the man at your right hand, ♦
the son of man you made so strong for yourself.

And so will we not go back from you; ♦
give us life, and we shall call upon your name.

*Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; ♦
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.*

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband

was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.”

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.