

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

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. *Entrance Antiphon*

Let your face shine forth. *Psalm*

'Behold, I have come to do your will.' *Second Reading*

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

And he shall stand and shepherd his flock  
in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty  
of the name of the Lord his God.  
And he shall be their peace.

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

Mariotto Albertinelli, *The Visitation* (1503)



Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Year C, 22nd December 2024

'Blessed are you among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'

Christ is coming! With their themes of obedience to God's will and faith in God's promises, today's readings are full of expectant hope. The prophet Micah (**First Reading**) foretells the birth of the Messiah. Jesus will come from the small town of Bethlehem: he is the new king who will reunite and rule all the people, as a shepherd guides his flock. The **Psalm** reminds us to call on God as our shepherd, placing our trust in his power and strength, especially when we face struggles.

The **Second Reading** highlights the obedience of Jesus to God's will. In offering himself as a sacrifice, Jesus brings salvation from sin to all who have faith in him.

The **Gospel** describes Mary's visit to her cousin, Elizabeth, and their mutual greeting. Jesus is recognized as the Messiah even before his birth. Elizabeth sings Mary's praise because Mary bears the Lord, and Elizabeth's own unborn child, John the Baptist, 'leaps for joy'.

As we draw closer to Christmas, we may like to pray:

'Lord, help us, like Mary, to be humble and obedient to your will. Help us to see your presence in our daily lives. May we recognize and welcome you in every moment.'



### 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.

## Psalm 79 (80)

**R./ Bring us back, O God;  
let your face shine forth, and we shall be saved.**

**O** shepherd of Israel, hear us,  
enthroned on the cherubim, shine forth.  
Rouse up your might and come to save us.

God of hosts, turn again, we implore;  
look down from heaven and see.  
Visit this vine and protect it,  
the stock your right hand has planted,  
the son you have claimed for yourself.

May your hand be on the one at your right hand,  
the son of man you have confirmed as your own.  
And we shall never forsake you again;  
give us life that we may call upon your name.

I find a quiet place, and slowly settle into prayer. I note how I am feeling. Is there anything in particular I bring with me into my prayer today ... fears, joys, anxieties, consolations ...? I entrust any concerns to the Lord for now, so that I can focus my attention on this time with God.

When ready, I slowly read the psalm. I pay attention to any word, phrase or image that touches me, allowing it to soak in.

Perhaps I pray this psalm with Jesus, who would have prayed it many times. It is a prayer asking God for help and guidance.

Maybe I ponder the psalmist's trust in God, as he calls out: 'hear us ... save us ... turn to us ... see us ... visit us ... protect us ... bring us back ... give us life ...'. How does this make me feel?

Or perhaps I am drawn to the image of God as the shepherd, who always cares for and restores me.

I may like to rest with this, sensing the warmth of God's loving gaze shining forth upon me, or of God being with me in a different way.

I allow any words and feelings to speak to my heart ... and I listen for what God might be saying to me.

Perhaps there is something I wish to say in response?

Asking for the gift of deeper trust, I close my prayer with '*Glory be*'.

## Gospel Luke 1: 39–45

**I**n those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.'

Amidst the busyness of these days before Christmas, I find a comfortable place to spend some precious time with the Lord. I gently become still. In time, I invite the Holy Spirit to guide my prayer, and turn to this familiar Gospel. I read it prayerfully, pausing wherever I feel drawn.

What touches me most? Why is that?

I imagine the scene. After a long journey of some 80 miles, made 'with haste', Mary arrives at Elizabeth's house. Perhaps she has come to congratulate and care for her older cousin?

I watch and listen to the intimate moment between the two women. What am I noticing: smiles, hugs, tears, laughter, dancing ...? What might they be saying to each other in this moment? Or are there no words?

I notice the look of joy on Elizabeth's face, as her baby, John the Baptist, moves inside her, recognizing God's presence.

Mary brings this presence into the lives of Elizabeth and Zechariah too.

I ponder how I reflect Jesus's presence to others in my daily life.

How am I serving God?

I ask Jesus for the grace he feels I need to help me.

As I ponder Mary's visit, I reflect on those people I myself visit when I need to share something: whether I bring joyful news, or feel in need of support and comfort. Giving thanks, I bring them to mind now.

I gather my thoughts and emotions together, and share them with Jesus, heart to heart.

When ready, and with deep gratitude, I close my prayer slowly: '*Hail Mary ...*'