



Mary's first journey after the annunciation was to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who needed her help. Christmas brings the question to each of us, "who needs my help?"



After 5 years in homelessness and rough sleeping, Michael and Sarah are now looking forward to spending time with their children in their own home this Christmas.



When Mary discovered that her cousin Elizabeth, in her old age, was six months pregnant, she went "as quickly as she could" and stayed with her three months until her child was born. Mary's first thought was not for herself, even though she herself was now pregnant, but for an elderly lady who might need some support and help.

During Advent, we wait for Jesus to come to us. But every day, Jesus waits for us to come to him. When we, like Mary, reach out to help someone in need, we encounter Jesus.

"Whatever you do to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me." In every act of kindness, in sharing or supporting those in need, in visiting the lonely, or those in hospital, Jesus is present to us at that time.

At Christmas, we remember Jesus coming to us, to share our human condition with all its suffering. His love and compassion for us is the model for our love and compassion for each other. We are called to grow more and more like him. Every day offers us many opportunities to do that.

Fr. Peter McVerry SJ, Peter McVerry Trust.

**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.

**PENITENTIAL ACT**

You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.** May almighty God have mercy on us... **Amen.**

*(The Gloria is omitted awaiting its Christmas Proclamation.)*

**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. Who lives and reigns .....

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**FIRST READING Micah 5:1 - 4**

**A reading from the prophet Micah**

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 then on he will extend his power to the ends of the land. He himself will be peace.

**The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps.79:2-3.15-16.18-19**

**R. God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

- O shepherd of Israel, hear us, shine forth from your cherubim throne.  
O Lord, rouse up your might,  
O Lord, come to our help. **[R]**
- God of hosts, turn again, we implore, look down from heaven and see. Visit this vine and protect it, the vine your right hand has planted. **[R]**
- May your hand be on the man you have chosen, the man you have given your strength. And we shall never forsake you again: give us life that we may call upon your name. **[R]**

**SECOND READING Hebrews 10:5-10**

**A reading from the letter to the Hebrews**

This is what Christ said, on coming into the world: You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book, 'God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will.' Notice that he says first: You did not want what the Law lays down as the things to be offered, that is: the sacrifices, the oblations, the holocausts and the sacrifices for sin, and you took no pleasure in them; and then he says: Here I am! I am coming to obey your will. He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once and for all by Jesus Christ.

**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 1:39 - 44**

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.**

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.'

**The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**NICENE CREED**

**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 for following 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.**

**LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

Pray brothers and sisters, .....  
**May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.**

**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.

**AFTER THE CONSECRATION**

**The mystery of faith. When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.**

**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.

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