

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the servant of the Lord: may his will for me be done. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 1:39-44

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Why should it happen that I am honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?

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.



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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT / C

19 DECEMBER 2021

GOD IN OUR LIVES

Judah was not one of the more powerful tribes of Israel. It must have come as a surprise to many when Micah prophesied that it was from Bethlehem, one of the least clans of Judah, that a future king would come. The future king that Micah promised was one who would feed the flock of God's people using his power to protect them. The passage from the letter to the Hebrews reminds us that as king Jesus more than fulfilled that promise when he offered his very life as a sacrifice.

In the Gospel, the new age promised by Micah dawns as Mary visits her kinswoman Elizabeth in the hill country of Judah. Elizabeth wonders at the visit of Mary, the mother of the Lord, and she is filled with the Holy Spirit by whose power she recognises that the promises God made long ago are now coming to their fulfilment. Perhaps her wonder at John's birth, against all expectations when hope had been lost, has sharpened her perception of the mysterious ways of God.

Often it is those who have experienced God's unexpected intervention in their own lives who are the most adept at perceiving how God is working in the lives of others. Advent can be the same for us, a moment of blessing that invites us to recognise how God is working in our lives and world, most of all, in the birth of Jesus our Lord.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Mic 5:1-4

A reading from the prophet Micah.

Out of you will be born the one who is to rule over Israel.

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.

RESP PSALM

Ps 79:2-3, 15-16, 18-19. R. v. 4

**R. Lord, make us turn to you;
let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

1. 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.**

2. 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.**



3. 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

Heb 10:5-10

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

I am coming to do your will.

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.