

Love

Friday 20th December



The Annunciation by Fra Angelico c. 1426

Scripture: Luke 1.26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

To reflect

Love and Advent, Love and Christmas. Love came down at Christmas, God so loved the world that he sent his only son.

No matter where you look love is around us at this time of year, in movies, in popular songs, in love expressed in friendship, families and communities. Love is also one of the possible themes for lighting the fourth candle in Advent Wreaths on the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Advent is about preparing ourselves to celebrate Christmas, that expression of God's continuing love of humanity in sending Jesus to the world – so that all might have eternal life. A continuation of the story of God's saving grace and mercy to humanity.

Today's Gospel reading is the Annunciation – Mary's encounter with the Angel Gabriel and Mary discovering her part in God's love of humanity and Mary saying yes to being part of it in a way she never would have imagined.

How is God inviting you to be part of God's everlasting love for all of humanity this Season?

Advent Antiphon: O Clavis David

O Key of David* **Sceptre of the House of Israel, what you close none shall open, what you open none shall close: Come, lead forth from prison those who lie in chains, who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death`.**

Annunciation by Marie Howe

Even if I don't see it again — nor ever feel it
I know it is — and that if once it hailed me
it ever does —
And so it is myself I want to turn in that direction
not as towards a place, but it was a tilting
within myself,
as one turns a mirror to flash the light to where
it isn't — I was blinded like that — and swam
in what shone at me
only able to endure it by being no one and so
specifically myself I thought I'd die
from being loved like that.

From the Salt Project

To Listen (these and other suggestions can be found on a Spotify playlist at

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0F5bU2sf4OiOtQY3q78Rf2?si=a99cbbf61e7d4587>)

- Two settings of today's Antiphon are by Gabriel Jackson (one performance is by the Choir of Merton College, Oxford) and Marc-Antoine Charpentier (one performance is by the Choir of Queen's College, Cambridge). These are contrasting choral styles, from different eras, but both reflecting on the text of the Antiphon.
- 'Love Came Down' is a setting of Christina Rossetti's poem 'Love Came Down at Christmas' by Joanna Forbes L'Estrange, one performance is by London Voices.
- 'Annunciation' words by Carol Ann Duffy, music by Sasha Johnson Manning, one version is by The Manchester Carollers. This is taken from Manchester Carols, a re-telling of the Christmas Story with text by the Scottish born former Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.