



Fruit

Wednesday 25th December



*Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337), Cappella Scrovegni a Padova, Life of Christ, Nativity, Birth of Jesus
(detail with midwife Salome)*

Scripture: Luke 2.1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

To reflect

In Luke 1.39-42, Elizabeth when meeting the pregnant Mary, Mother of Our Lord exclaims
'When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." This day Christmas Day, we remember the birth of that fruit of Mary's womb – Jesus our Emmanuel, God with Us, Prince of Peace, Saviour. This morning the world has changed forever – a tiny baby with huge consequences and much to come.

The Christmas Carol, *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree*, speaks of Jesus as an apple tree, connecting to the adult Jesus referring to his life as the tree of life (Luke 13.18-19), along with verses in Revelation 22. Today, as you celebrate the birth of Christ – give thanks for this fruit of Mary's womb and the turning upside down of the world in the birth of this infant.

To pray

Almighty God,
you wonderfully created and yet more
wonderfully restored our human nature.
May we share the divine life of your Son Jesus Christ,
who humbled himself to share our humanity,
and now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Meeting by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

After so long an absence
At last we meet again:
Does the meeting give us pleasure,
Or does it give us pain?
The tree of life has been shaken,
And but few of us linger now,
Like the Prophet's two or three berries
In the top of the uppermost bough.
We cordially greet each other
In the old, familiar tone;
And we think, though we do not say it,
How old and gray he is grown!
We speak of a Merry Christmas
And many a Happy New Year;
But each in his heart is thinking
Of those that are not here.
We speak of friends and their fortunes,
And of what they did and said,
Till the dead alone seem living,
And the living alone seem dead.
And at last we hardly distinguish
Between the ghosts and the guests;
And a mist and shadow of sadness
Steals over our merriest jests

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

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0F5bU2sf4OiOrQY3q78Rf2?si=a99cbbf61e7d44587>)

- 'Jesus Christ the Apple Tree' by Elizabeth Poston, one version is by The Sixteen .
- 'An Earthly Blessing' by Will Todd, one recording is by the Wellesian Consort and the Will Todd Ensemble. This piece speaks of the world being changed forward and the love of God opening our hearts.
- 'O Magnum Mysterium' is taken from a chant at Matins on Christmas day – O great mystery. There are many settings of this text, one is by Morten Lauridsen (one performance is by VOCES8).

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