

Prayers for the Week
Week Beginning 15th December

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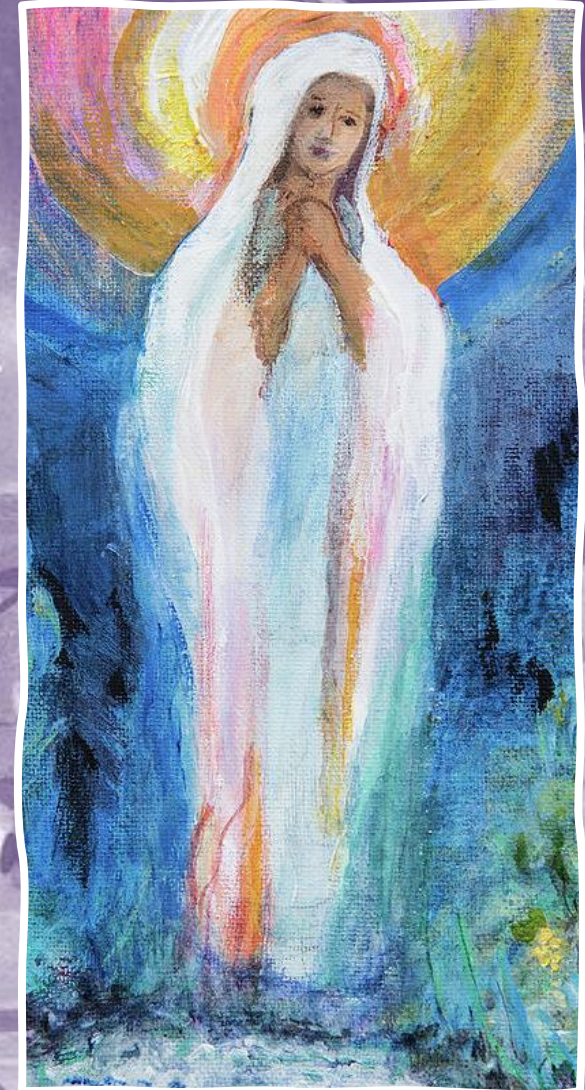
Monday 15th December
Monday in the Third Week of Advent

Matthew 1:18-24

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife

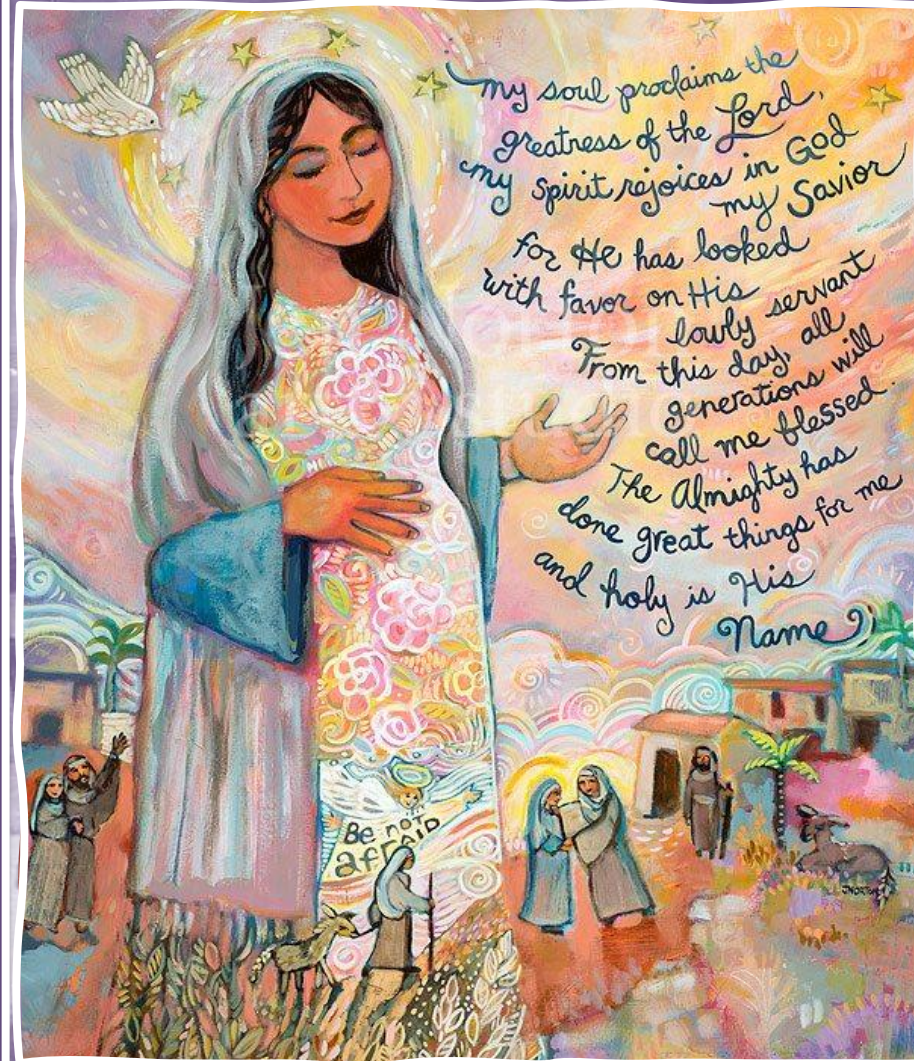




Reflection

What do we know about St Joseph? That he loved Mary so much that he suppressed his doubts about her chastity to allow himself to be regarded as the father of her child, knowing that he wasn't; that he brought up that child as his own, despite great difficulties and dangers, particularly at the start; that he taught him his trade; that he loved him; and that Jesus' virile health as an adult is proof of good parenting by his foster-father. Joseph is the obvious patron of adoptive fathers.

Hail Mary ...

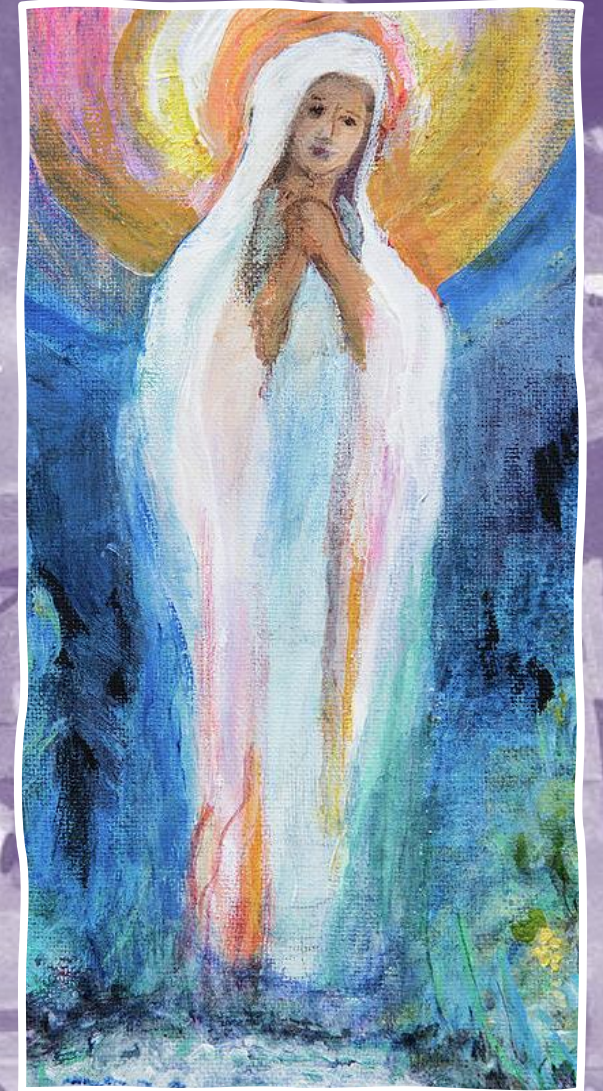




Tuesday 16th December Tuesday in the Third Week of Advent

Luke 1:5-25

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur." Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."



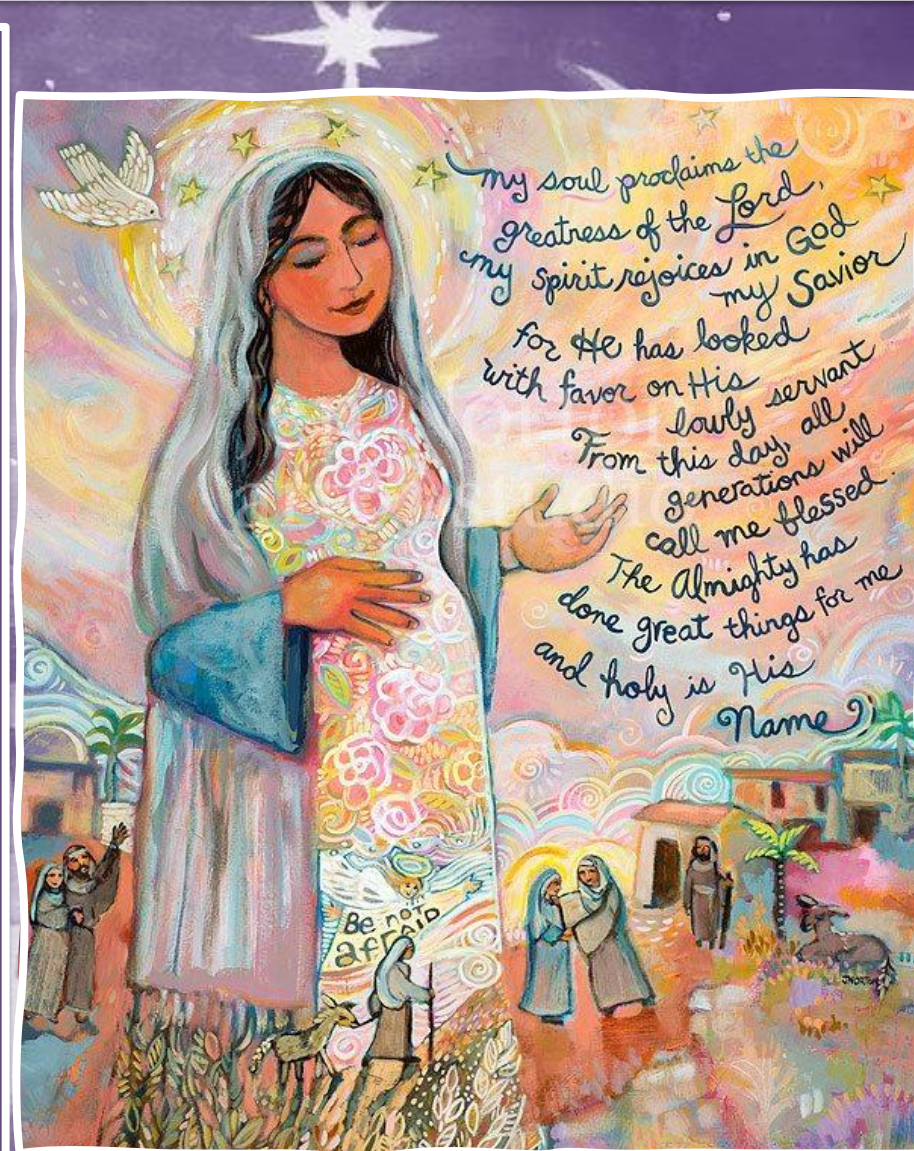


Reflection

The situation of Zechariah and Elizabeth as old and childless is presented in an historical context. There is an annunciation to Zechariah in the Temple of a child who will be called John. We are told about his manner of life and of his mission to prepare people for the Lord. John is to be a voice, but Zechariah because of his lack of faith was struck dumb. In due course his wife Elizabeth conceived. She spent months in retreat and thanked God for taking away her disgrace in being childless.

Zechariah and Elizabeth are an old couple, as were Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18), when they were promised a child. Am I comfortable with a God of surprises? Each of us is a promised child of God with a mission to prepare the way. Do I fear this or, do I trust God to show me the way? Lord, help me appreciate that I am a promised child, a child of promise, so that I may carry out what you desire of me.

Hail Mary ...





Wednesday 17th December
Wednesday in the Third Week of Advent

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 forever, 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.





Reflection

Let us consider today that, long before we were born, we are called by God to know, love and serve him. We have been the constant recipients of his blessings. Do we notice these in our daily lives? Do we take time to listen the still small voice of God in our day?

Mary was listening. She heard the message of the angel and responded with an unconditional 'yes'. We also can become filled with grace if, like her, we listen and respond with a resounding and unconditional 'yes' to all that God wants from us.

Hail Mary ...





Thursday 18th December
Thursday in the Third Week of Advent

Luke 1: 39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 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. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."



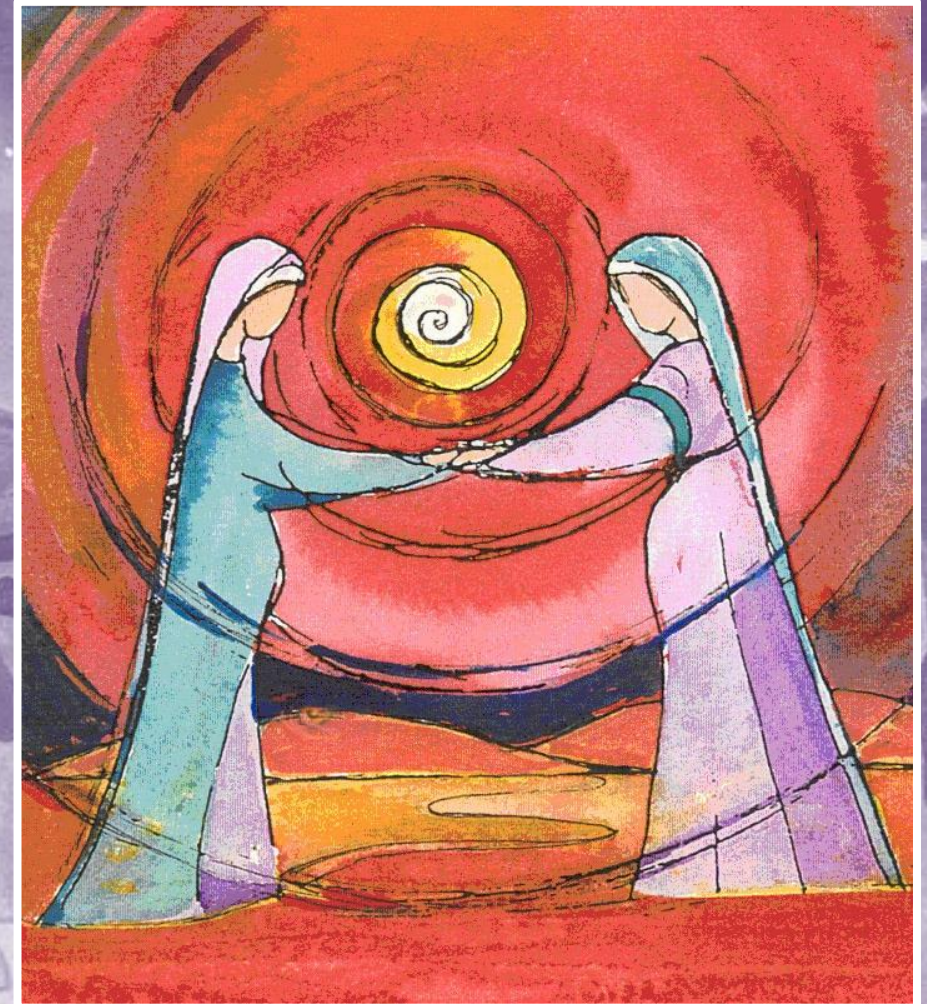


Reflection

This scene belongs to two strong women who share the joy of bringing the good news of salvation into the world. I thank God for all women who play their part in serving the plans of God.

The child leaped for joy.' In Luke's Gospel, joy emerges wherever Jesus is. Angels and shepherds rejoice at his birth. His disciples cannot fast and mourn while he is around. Zacchaeus rejoices when Jesus comes to his house. The disciples at Emmaus were overcome when they recognised Jesus as their companion, and the Gospel ends with the disciples returning to Jerusalem with great joy. We ask that we may also be full of joy because Jesus is near.

Hail Mary ...





Friday 19th December
Friday in the Third Week of Advent

Luke 1: 46-56

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." And Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.





Reflection

Mary's response to the loving action of God is to give praise and thanks. She is the lowly servant who acknowledged the favour of God, her Saviour, though she is the mother of the Saviour. This is the God of blessing, the God of reversals who raises the lowly and brings down the powerful from their thrones. The Magnificat is Mary's mission statement as a servant of God. She is in continuity with the faithful people of the past and the faith story of her people.

Mary gives us a model of prayer, rooted in the past but open to the future. The prayer invites us to give time to recognise and ponder on the gifts we have received, so that we can thank God for them.

Hail Mary ...

