

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.**

COLLECT

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 with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

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.

PSALM

Psalm 79

Response:

**God of hosts, bring us back;
let your face shine on us 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

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 1:39-45

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.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**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 during the next 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.**

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.
Amen.

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.
Amen.



Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mary's Way in Klenovnik, Croatia

The first two chapters of the Gospel according to Luke deal with the conception and birth of Jesus (and John the Baptist) and we usually refer to them as the Infancy Narrative.

There are five scenes, and the third of these is related in today's Gospel extract, the Visitation, in which Mary goes to visit her elderly and pregnant cousin, Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel has just told Mary that she is to be the mother of Jesus, and any message of this kind is always accompanied by a sign in the biblical story. Though Mary has assented to the angel's message, she wants to see the sign that confirms it, that Elizabeth is expecting a child herself.

In this scene, the two mothers and the two children are brought together, and John the Baptist performs his first act of witness to Jesus. Elizabeth recognises in the joyful movement of her unborn child the identity of Mary's baby and she bears witness by calling Mary "blessed" and "the mother of my Lord".

Luke emphasises in his Gospel the importance of listening to the word of the Lord. Elizabeth attributes Mary's blessedness to the fact that she believed (or trusted) that what the Lord had spoken would be fulfilled. Later in the Gospel we hear a woman in the crowd exclaiming to Jesus, "Blessed is she who bore you!" Jesus replies, "Blessed, rather, are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice!" However, we know that there is no distinction intended here, no diminishing of Mary's importance, but rather Jesus is presenting his mother in her true light. ■

REFLECT

The evangelists are interested first and foremost in the person of Jesus. We should see any other character in the story according to their relationship with Jesus. If we think that the episode in the Gospel today is simply Mary being concerned for the health and well-being of Elizabeth and going to look after her, then we are missing the point. The message of this section lies in what Elizabeth says to her cousin. Luke and Matthew relate that Jesus preaches a sermon containing what we call the 'Beatitudes', in which he gives a list of how people are "blessed". Through the mouth of Elizabeth, Luke describes what it means to be blessed: it is to believe in the word of the Lord. Mary has already shown this when she said to Gabriel, "let it be with me according to your word".

For Luke, Mary is the model disciple, who listens to the word of the Lord, meditates upon it and puts it into practice. In this way, she is the model for every Christian. She cannot be a model for us through her physical motherhood: but she can be our model through her obedience to the Word of the Lord and playing her part in God's plan for human beings. Luke holds up Mary and Jesus' relatives as examples of what it means to be a disciple: someone who hears the word of God and puts it into practice. To describe Mary in this way is to show her true importance and to give her proper honour and respect. ■

LEARN

The Infancy Narratives (the first two chapters) of Matthew and Luke present the evangelists' understanding of who Jesus is.

Elizabeth's pregnancy is the visible confirmation of Gabriel's message to Mary.

For Luke, Mary is the model disciple.

The true disciple of Jesus is one who listens to God's word, meditates upon it and puts it into practice in their daily life.

SAY

Blessed is she who believed that the promise of the Lord would be fulfilled.

DO

Say the second Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Visitation. Take your time over it and insert consecutive lines from the Gospel account in between the Hail Marys.