

December 20

Priest: 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, favored 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 favor 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. (Lk 1:26-38)

Reflection

Lector: The original reference for the fourth "O antiphon" is Isaiah, chapter 22. "Key of David" refers to the one with authority over the royal house of David. The antiphon begs Christ to come and unlock the doors for his people who sit in religious darkness and in the shadows of death. We must wait with longing for our Lord.

Mary's fiat - her total acceptance of God's will - brings us the

glimmer of light and hope for the coming of Emmanuel, God among us. Mary carries the key of David who will free us forever. Hail, full of grace!

Antiphon

Priest: O key of David, royal scepter of Israel, you who open and no one closes; who close and no one can open, come now, and free humanity from its bonds in prison, where it sits in darkness and the shadow of death. (cf. Is 22; Rev 3:7)

Magnificat

All: My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor 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. (Lk 1:46-55)

Intercessions

Priest: Adonai! Son of the living God! The day of the Lord draws near;

All: he comes as the one who is to save us through his suffering, death and resurrection.

Priest: Virgin Mary, Mother of the Savior, we wait with you quietly for the birth of your Son,

All: who will set us free from ignorance and darkness.

Priest: Virgin Mother, you placed yourself at God's service and conceived his Son first in your heart, then in your womb;

All: show us how to open our hearts and receive your Son, for we have a deep bond with you, Christ's Mother and our Mother, too.

Priest: Mary, our Mother, give doctors and nurses strength to bring their patients to health,

All: that the ill might know the joy of good care in their infirmities.

Closing Prayer

Priest: Christ goes before us. He is the Lamb without sin who will open to us the gates of heaven. He is the high priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. He is the king of justice and his reign is eternal.

You who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

All: Amen.

The final Marian hymn on page 8.