

December 24

Priest: And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel. (Lk 1:56; 67-80)

Reflection

Lector: Come, O Lord, for the whole world breathlessly waits for your birth. This one happy moment contains all ages - past, present and future - bonding eternal peace between heaven and earth through a newborn child. We bow in adoration and joy. In calm and peace we look into ourselves and present to the infant our thoughts and sentiments.

Lord, today your goodness overflows and a branch springs forth from the root of Jesse. The bud of salvation unfolds itself from the Virgin's womb in the dead of winter. The seed entrusted to earth breaks forth in our cold, frozen hearts and warms them with the presence of God in human form.

Antiphon

Priest: O Emmanuel, our ruler and lawgiver, the expected of the nations and the Redeemer of all, come now to deliver us, O our Lord and our master.

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: Father of the Word made flesh, bring us joy and peace;

All: help us to live united in respect and love for each other.

Priest: We await the coming of your Son,

All: for you are faithful to your promises of salvation and eternal life.

Priest: May we prepare ourselves for the birth of your Son,

All: by meditating upon your word.

Priest: Through the Word made flesh may we learn to love each other,

All: so Christ will find all of us waiting for him in joyful prayer at the Second Coming.

Priest: Adonai, God of love and mercy, help us follow the example of Mary,

All: who believed the angel, hastened to help Elizabeth, and welcomed your Son in a cold, bare stable, warming him only with her exceeding love.

Closing Prayer

Priest: Let us pray. Come to live among us, Lord, so that we may always receive your forgiveness and mercy. Jesus our king, clothed in a robe of flesh, give us love, wisdom and understanding at your birth. Reveal to us the mystery of your life, then send us forth to reveal your Word over all the earth.

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.

