

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The twofold expectation of Christ

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.

For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him,
the Virgin Mother longed for him
with love beyond all telling,
John the Baptist sang of his coming
and proclaimed his presence when he came.

It is by his gift that already we rejoice
at the mystery of his Nativity,
so that he may find us watchful in prayer
and exultant in his praise.

Communion Antiphon

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son;
and his name will be called Emmanuel.

After Annunciation

Rest, little guest, beneath my breast.

Feed, sweet seed, at your need.

I took Love for my Lord, and this is my reward -
My body is good earth that you, dear plant, have birth.

(Anna Wickham)

SAINT MARY STAR OF THE SEA, LARGS OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR, MILLPORT

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
20 DECEMBER 2020

Readings



“He went in and said to her,
‘Rejoice, so highly favoured!
The Lord is with you.’”

(Luke 1:28)

FROM THE END TO ITS BEGINNING

Until 17th December, Advent is focused on the end of time and the return of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead. Then, suddenly, the Liturgy shifts the camera back to the beginning of the end: to the first coming of Christ in humility to save the living and the dead. The sudden juxtaposition of the two scenes, the Parousia (the second coming) and the Annunciation (the first coming) almost shocks us. What has the splendour and majesty of the former got to do with the imperceptible ordinariness of the latter? Why does the Church pull the rug from under our feet and frustrate the climax of the final end by facing us, yet again, with the beginning?

Well, you will surely remember the phrase, “in our end is our beginning” and “in our beginning is our end.” When Christ comes in glory openly and finally to make human beings divine in the resurrection of the flesh of the just it is only because he first came hiddenly to make himself, a divine Being, human in his descent into the flesh. The power and glory he showed at his hidden incarnation is in some ways even more splendid than the power and glory he will show openly at the end of time. God’s humility is his glory. Its manifestation in majesty and light merely reflects outwardly the innermost glory of his humility. The Annunciation in this sense is utterly astonishing, to both man and angel, because it is the means by which the glory and splendour of God most reveal themselves. The Parousia blossoms forth from the Annunciation, reveals its meaning and consummates it.

The Liturgy therefore invites each one of us to contemplate that our stance towards the Second Coming is rooted in our stance towards the First Coming. But we must be careful. It is so easy to get stuck at Christmas, to suffer a kind of “arrested development” in our faith in Christ. The First Coming incorporates not only the Annunciation and the Nativity, as well as the other “joyful mysteries” of the Rosary. It also incorporates the mysteries of light, the sorrowful mysteries and the glorious ones. Not only. We can actually say that the First Coming is still underway, is still working itself out. How? Through the Sacraments, the Church’s Worship and pastoral mission, through the lives of the saints and of all who seek to live the commandment of love of God and of neighbour. Christ’s Second Coming is but the fulfilment of the ongoing First Coming.

And so the sudden shift from the Parousia to the Annunciation, invites us to begin again, to renew and deepen our immersion in the whole life of Christ. Only in the light of the whole can we truly celebrate each mystery properly. Each end is a beginning.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading

Romans 16:25-27

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 88(89):2-5,27,29

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

Gospel

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. He went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.’ She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, ‘Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?’ ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you’ the angel answered ‘and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.’ ‘I am the handmaid of the Lord,’ said Mary ‘let what you have said be done to me.’ And the angel left her.

The Gospel of the Lord.