

# The Living Word

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B

24 December 2023

## First Reading 2 Sm 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16

*The kingdom of David will be established for ever in the sight of the Lord.*

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent'. Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.'

But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:

'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever."

## Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 88:2-5. 27. 29. R. see v.2**

**(R.) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

1. I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;  
through all ages my mouth will proclaim  
your truth.  
Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for  
ever,  
that your truth is firmly established as  
the heavens. (R.)
2. 'I have made a covenant with my chosen  
one;  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
I will establish your dynasty for ever  
and set up your throne through all ages.' (R.)
3. He will say to me: 'You are my father,  
my God, the rock who saves me.'  
I will keep my love for him always;  
or him my covenant shall endure. (R.)

## Second Reading Rom 16:25-27

*The mystery kept secret for endless ages is now revealed.*

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.

## Gospel Acclamation Lk 1:38

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

***I am the servant of the Lord:  
may his will for me be done.***

**Alleluia!**

## Gospel Lk 1:26-38

*You will conceive and bear a son.*

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.

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## Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

St Luke's account of the Annunciation draws on the Jewish tradition describing creation: 'There was darkness over the deep and God's Spirit hovered over the water. God said: "Let there be light", and there was light.' (Genesis 1:2-3) St Luke depicts Mary hearing in the depths of her soul: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow.'

The Holy Spirit hovers over this young Jewish woman so that the most stupendously creative act in human history can take place. With her consent, God assumes human nature to be gradually enfleshed, embodied, in Mary's womb.

A naturally bewildered young woman was able to respond to God's will because she understood the imagery and the symbolism of the Genesis Story. We, in turn, need to read the Gospels in all their Jewishness so that we can understand when God's Holy Spirit hovers over our lives, asking us to fulfil some particular role in the Divine Plan.

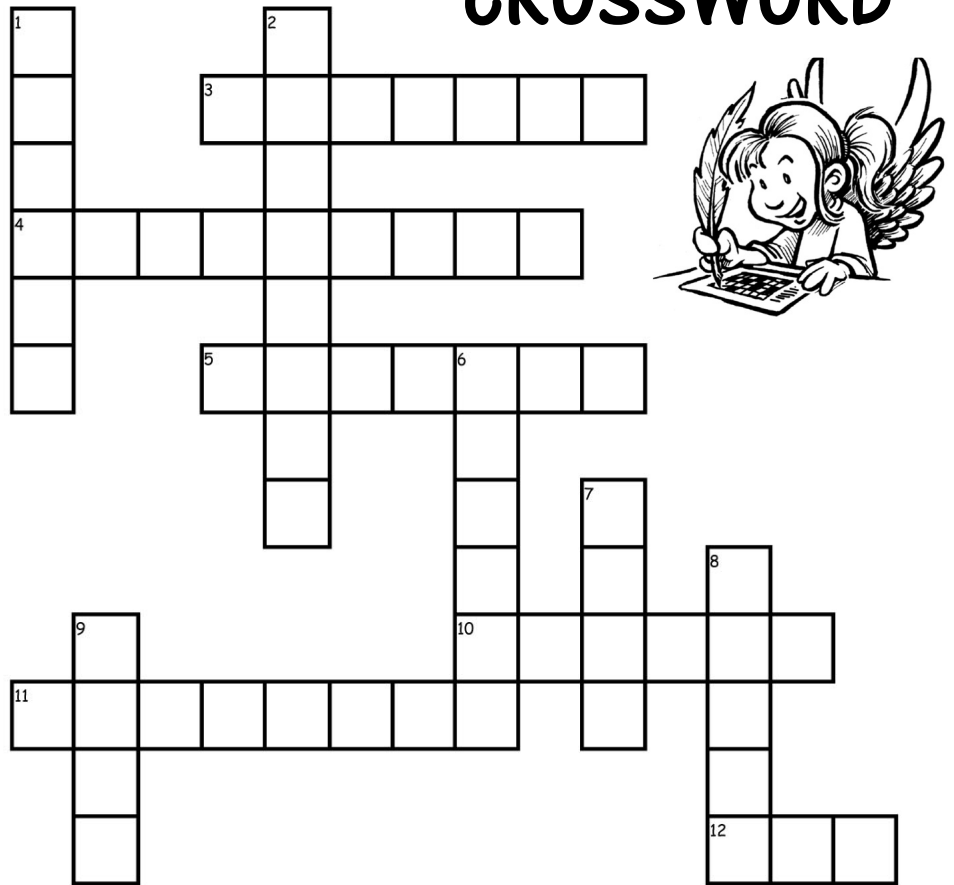
We could pause for a moment to ask whether *now* is the time for a Marian response: 'Be it done unto me according to your word.'

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**S**t Stephen was the first deacon chosen by the apostles soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He took care of the needs of Greek-speaking widows among the Christian community in Jerusalem, and he was also known as a zealous preacher. But his preaching was considered blasphemy by the Jewish council and he was stoned to death in c.35 AD. Stephen became the first martyr for Christ and even as they threw stones at him, he asked God to forgive his attackers for their sins.

# CROSSWORD



## Across

- 3: the angel sent by God to deliver a message  
 4: Mary's cousin who was also going to have a son  
 5: Mary said, 'I am the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_! Let it happen as you have said.'  
 10: the angel told Mary that Jesus would forever rule the people of which land?  
 11: unable to understand, mixed up  
 12: the opposite of daughter

## Down

- 1: Mary was engaged to this man  
 2: the town where Mary lived  
 6: scared, frightened  
 7: the angel had a message for this person  
 8: Mary was told to give her child this name  
 9: the angel said, 'your child will be called the \_\_\_\_\_ Son of God'

Use the words below to find out what the angel Gabriel and the Blessed Virgin Mary are saying to each other.

\_\_\_\_\_ favoured one!  
 The \_\_\_\_\_ is with you.  
 Don't be \_\_\_\_\_!  
 God is \_\_\_\_\_ with you. You shall have a \_\_\_\_\_ and his name will be \_\_\_\_\_.



I am the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord!  
 Let this \_\_\_\_\_ as you have said.

**Jesus   afraid   happen   servant   Lord   Greetings   pleased   son**