

Monday 8 April 2024

Lady Day

The annunciation of our Lord



The Virgin shrinks back in reluctance in

The annunciation with Saints Margaret and Ansanus

Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi, 1333

'Lady Day' is the old name for the Feast of the Annunciation which celebrates the Archangel Gabriel visiting the Virgin Mary. He said she would conceive and become the mother of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah and Son of God. Gabriel told Mary to name the baby 'Jesus', which means 'God saves'. The Annunciation therefore announces the Incarnation.

Luke 1:26–38 describes the story. It says, '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, favoured one! The Lord is with you.'

Lady Day occurs exactly nine months before Christmas because that's the natural gestation period for a human child. **Lady Day this year has been transferred from 25 April because of Easter.**

Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © The publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

The welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

HYMN [Tell out my soul \(the Magnificat\)](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

The grace of God has dawned upon the world

through our Saviour Jesus Christ,

who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own.

Let us confess our sins.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for Lady Day

We beseech you, O Lord,
pour your grace into our hearts,
that as we have known the incarnation
of your Son Jesus Christ
by the message of an angel,
so by his cross and passion
we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah.

The Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, 'Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.

Then Isaiah said, 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.'

Isaiah 7:10-14a

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure'. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me). When he said, 'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings' (these are offered according to the law), then he added, 'See, I have come to do your will.' He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. *Hebrews 10:4-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Longing for light

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

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, favoured 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 favour 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.

Mary said: 'My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he has had regard for the humble state of His bond-slave; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is his name and his mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear him. He has done mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed. He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever.'

And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.

Luke 1:26-56

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

The Archangel Gabriel appears twice in Luke's Gospel: both occasions occur in Chapter 1 and the two instances display a curious symmetry. In both encounters, Gabriel appears unexpectedly; he announces the birth of an unforeseen child; in both cases, the person to whom he appears is surprised and needs reassuring; in both, the person receiving the message simply does not believe the message; Gabriel responds to their shock and then vanishes; and in both cases the baby is born as expected and becomes a holy person. But the similarity ends there.

Gabriel first appears to Zechariah. He is married, old, likely to be male, and holds a professional religious job—he is the High priest. Gabriel responds to his fear and disbelief by striking him deaf and dumb. Gabriel next appears to Mary, who is single, very young, female and, while devout, holds no professional religious role. Women in first-century Palestine never did. This time, Gabriel responds to her fear and disbelief by reassuring her. Why the difference?

The two backgrounds of Zechariah and Mary cover most options: between us, like them, we are male and female, married and single, between the extremes of old and young. And all of us are religious—all of us are devout. Some of us hold professional positions while others hold no official position. And, like Zechariah and Mary, we'd be amazed if an Archangel stood before us with a task from God. So we need to understand the differences so that we can respond correctly.

The Scriptures are silent about the reasons for Gabriel's different response to Zechariah and Mary. We must therefore look into what is not said for clues.

Coming from God, the Archangel will have looked at the heart rather than at appearances, and there were clear differences. Zechariah was the High priest: the story describes the way he was on duty in the Temple when Gabriel appeared to him. He had been given a job of astonishing importance and would have worn the ceremonial robes while entering the Holy of Holies. He knew that God might smite him if he had not cleansed himself ritually or did not perform the duties properly. That risk of smiting was so real that he would have first tied a rope around his ankle just in case: the other priests would use that rope to pull his corpse from the Holy of Holies if he died during his encounter with God. We can guess that the other priests were already getting somewhat nervous because the text of Luke 1 tells us they were discussing why Zechariah was spending such a long time in the Holy of Holies. They were possibly asking each other, 'Is it time to pull him out yet?' In summary, Zechariah was doing something extraordinarily holy and knew it. He is entering the presence of God the Almighty, doing his job as intercessor and priest.

It's therefore astonishing that Zechariah was unprepared when he saw an archangel. Worse, as custodian of the Jewish traditions, he doesn't seem to have seen the similarities between his own situation (he was childless but promised children) and that of the patriarch Abraham (who was similarly childless until God miraculously helped his wife Sarah to conceive). We sense how Zechariah was doing his job but didn't know the Scriptures and didn't know God: we are invited to think that he didn't live the life he knew God wanted. Perhaps he was 'going through the motions' which can involve 'head knowledge' without holiness of life. As it says in the Letter to the Hebrews, 'Without holiness no one will see the Lord.'

By contrast, Mary was young. As a girl of poor parents, almost certainly she had almost no education. Legends suggest Mary's mother Anna taught the girl to read but that's pious supposition and not very likely. She will have certainly known the stories of the patriarchs—everyone did—but she will have had no formal framework into which they could be accommodated; her understanding would be elementary; what she knew was therefore by rote and the choice of her parents. There was therefore less of a spiritual veneer, less spiritual 'baggage'. We know that Jesus treasured the spirituality of children and maybe Jesus uttered his beatitude about 'blessèd are the poor in spirit' with his own mother in mind.

While the clearest differences between Zechariah and Mary involve status and education, we can also guess pride and lowliness.

The clear message of this story is, then, that God can be pleased or displeased with us. Being important and having responsibilities does not guarantee his pleasure

but nor will a lack of them displease Him. Rather, the key is a person's willingness to see past whatever presents itself as coming from God and extracting whatever is genuinely spiritual from it. That's why today's Gospel emphasises how 'Mary pondered these things' but says nothing similar about Zechariah. Through this short phrase about Mary, God is asking us to view things with a sacramental mind-set: He doesn't so much want us to look *at* a situation as to look *through* it: that way we discern the way He is operating. Just as the bread and wine in a service of Holy Communion point beyond themselves to what sustains our spirit, and water in a service of baptism points beyond its liquid wetness to spiritual cleansing, so any situation allowed by God can help us extract godliness.

Today is the feast of the Annunciation, the visitation of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. God came to birth in Mary because she saw past the archangel to the God who sent him. In a spiritual sense, God wants to do the same for us: He wants to live in us if we look beyond whatever is visible in search of its spiritual meaning. One message from the Annunciation is therefore that spiritual purity can come from actively seeking God. Jesus got there first of course, because said 'Blessed are the pure in heart because they *will* see God'.

Prayers of intercession

On this day, God made our salvation known to Mary by the message of an angel. Filled with confidence, let us pray:

You chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son.

Have mercy on all who wait for your redemption. We pray for ...

Through your angel Gabriel you brought a message of peace and joy to Mary.

Give to the world the joy and peace of salvation. We pray for ...

By the consent of your handmaid and the power of the Holy Spirit,
your Word came to dwell among us. Open our hearts to receive Christ,
as Mary the Virgin received him. We pray for ...

You look with compassion on the lowly and fill the hungry with good things.

Encourage the downhearted, help all those in need and comfort those near to death.
We pray for ...

To you, O God, nothing is impossible, and you alone do marvellous things;
save us, and bring us on the last day with ... and all the faithful departed into your
glorious kingdom. We pray for ...

Grant, O Lord, that by the riches of your grace we may grow up into him who unites our life to yours, even he who is the first-born of all creation, your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The peace

In the tender mercy of our God,
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,
to give light to those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Mary mother of our God

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,
fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always:
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Blest are the pure in heart

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

We give you thanks and praise
that the Virgin Mary heard with faith the message of the angel,
and by the power of your Holy Spirit
conceived and bore the Word made flesh.

From the warmth of her womb
to the stillness of the grave
he shared our life in human form.
In him new light has dawned upon the world
and you have become one with us
that we might become one with you
in your glorious kingdom.

Therefore earth unites with heaven
to sing a new song of praise;
we too join with angels and archangels
as they proclaim your glory without end:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died:
Christ is risen:
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with St Mary and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink

in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

God Most High,
whose handmaid bore the Word made flesh:
we thank you that in this sacrament of our redemption
you visit us with your Holy Spirit
and overshadow us by your power;
strengthen us to walk with Mary the joyful path of obedience
and so to bring forth the fruits of holiness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen**

All **Almighty God,**
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.