

# Night Prayer

December 2021 Advent

I needed Mary's 'yes' to come to the Earth.



## Opening words

Christ, Light of the world,  
**meet us in our place of darkness.**

Christ, Light of the world,  
**meet us in our place of longing.**

Christ, Light of the world,  
**meet us in our place of working.**

## Advent candle(s)

If you wish to light one or more candles do so now and say the following:

I light this candle, as a sign of the King who comes to rule.

Jesus, our health, rule in our bodies.

**Come, Lord Jesus, come.**

Jesus, our worth, rule in our work.

**Come, Lord Jesus, come.**

Jesus, our love, rule in our households.

**Come, Lord Jesus, come.**

Jesus, our life, rule in our living and dying.

**Come, Lord Jesus, come.**

## Introduction

Traditionally each Sunday in Advent has a different theme, and most liturgies have been developed for a specific Sunday rather than the period as a whole. I have not tried to create a pastiche to take us on a journey through the four weeks but instead have concentrated on one theme, associated with the fourth Sunday of Advent – the obedience of Mary. The Protestant church tends to pay little attention to the role of Mary and I would suggest we miss a lot because of this.

### **Reading Luke 1: 26b-29**

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

### **Worship song**

'The Angel Gabriel from Heaven came.' Sung by the St Michael's Singers and the Coventry Singers. Words are on the screen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzC9dxwRddc>

### **Time to consider:**

There were safer places  
more comfortable places  
palaces and wealthy places  
Yet you chose a daughter of the soil  
Who would have otherwise  
lived a good and honest life  
grown and harvested crops  
cooked and washed and cared for others  
and been forgotten  
to be your temporary home  
to be exalted for all time.

### **Reading Luke 1: 30-38**

<sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

<sup>34</sup> 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.'

<sup>38</sup> 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.

**Time to consider:**

When does an ordinary life  
Become extraordinary?  
A mundane day  
Become revolutionary?  
A moment in time  
Change history?

When God enters in  
Forgives sin  
Allows us to  
Begin again

When we repeat  
Those words of Mary  
'May it be to me  
As you say'.

**The Magnificat**

This version is a Gregorian Chant, reflecting a tradition that has lasted for centuries. It is sung in Latin with subtitles in Spanish and English.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLUZM3nJ4sg>

**A moment of silence**

During the silence, you may like to re-read and reflect on the Gospel words, or to look at the following three pictures – and see how you react to three quite different interpretations of the Annunciation – or simply enjoy the peace and calm.



Raphael Soyer, *Annunciation*, 1980, oil on linen, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the Sara Roby Foundation.

Raphael Soyer once said, "If art is to survive it must describe and express people, their lives and times. It must communicate." Throughout his life, Soyer explored the inner individual.

*Annunciation* is a quiet painting of two young women caught in a moment of introspection. The biblical title is a clue to an implied meaning about regeneration and the mystery of life.



'The Annunciation', Caravaggio: 1608-9 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy.

Caravaggio painted church paintings during his last period in Naples. There is reason to believe that the artist's last altarpiece is this Annunciation that reached the high altar of the cathedral of Nancy in Lorraine just after the church was founded (1609).

The angel's face is practically invisible. The Virgin does not look at him, she is completely self-absorbed, her pose does not indicate joyful acceptance of the news, nor of calmness and equanimity. The burden of the message seems too great for her to bear.



The painter is unknown but probably early sixteenth century Dutch. It contains all the traditional images that we have come to associate with the Annunciation, with the lily and the hovering dove, Mary piously with her prayer book, set in a strange building that is a mix of church and domestic architecture.

## **We pray**

Into the daily cycle of our lives  
When all seems well  
With us and with the world  
When our yoke is easy  
And the burden light  
You break in

### **And scatter our complacency**

Into the daily cycle of our lives  
When we are comfortable  
And at our ease  
When the fire is lit  
But eyes are closed  
You break in

### **And challenge our dependency**

You break into  
Our daily prayers  
Humble hearts  
Lay souls bare  
You break in

### **You break in**

You break in  
When defences are down  
With an Angel's shout  
Or the quietest sound  
You break in

### **You break in**

And we change  
**And all things change**  
When you break in

## **Worship song**

**O come, O come Emmanuel.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD-jBLZSZNU>

Filmed in Israel and sung by Anna Hawkins in English and Hebrew. The words are below.

O come, O come Emmanuel  
to free your captive Israel.

Verse 1 Hebrew (in Latin script)	(English Translation)
Chazor, chazor Immanu-El	O come, O come, Emmanuel,
Ufde asirei Israel	and ransom captive Israel
Shebagola ne'enachim	that mourns in lonely exile here
Ad ki tavo Ben Elohim	until the Son of God appear.
Simchu, Simchu, Immanu-El	Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Yavo lachem bnei-Israel	to you shall come , O Israel

Oh, come thou wisdom from on high,  
and order all things far and nigh;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
and teach us in her ways to go.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel  
To you shall come, Emmanuel

Oh, come, desire of nations, bind  
All peoples in one the heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease  
Fill the whole world with heavens peace  
Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel.

**Intercessions** – A circle prayer.

Imagine throwing a pebble into the centre of a pond, and the circles of ripples that move out from the centre.

We pray firstly for those closest to us, our immediate family and closest friends – for their health, needs, joys and fears.

(Silent prayer)

God of creation, God of Salvation  
Hear the prayers of our hearts

We pray for our extended family and friends who we might not see each week – for their love and concern, for their wellbeing.

(Silent prayer)

God of creation, God of Salvation  
Hear the prayers of our hearts

As the ripples reach out toward the land we pray for those who we only have contact with annually or less – for a blessing this Advent-time  
(Silent prayer)

God of creation, God of Salvation  
Hear the prayers of our hearts

And as the ripples reach their furthest point we pray for this world and its people – for the needs of this week and the future.

(Silent prayer)

God of creation, God of Salvation  
Who speaks to us through thunder and whisper  
Who loves us as if there were but one of us to love  
Hear the prayers of our hearts.

### **Closing music**

‘Bless the Lord my soul.’ This is the Taizé chant.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYLKrFOLS-E>

### **Commission**

Walk forward without fear into God’s ways,  
And enter with assurance and trust into the love of Christ.  
May we be filled with the hope and promise of the Spirit,  
And greet with joy all the unexpected and unanticipated happenings,  
That give us glimpses of what your new world is becoming.

### **Benediction**

May God the Father bless us;  
may Christ take care of us;  
the Holy Ghost enlighten us all the days of our life.  
The Lord be our defender and keeper of body and soul,  
both now and for ever, to the ages of ages.  
(*Æthelwold c 908-984*)

*Most of the liturgy used for this service was taken or adapted from [godspacelight.com](http://godspacelight.com)*

Before you go! And as it will soon be Christmas, here is a link to a short video (under two minutes) in which we hear Matthew 1: 18-23 against a series of timelapses of opening flowers.

<https://vimeo.com/485656729>

This is how the birth of Jesus came about:

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph was faithful to the law and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But an angel of God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people." All this took place to fulfil what God had said through the prophet, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means "God is with us")."



Australian Nativity