

Living the Word: 2 Samuel 7.1-11 & 16

How magnificent the promise of God which we read in today's Old Testament lesson! David, considering how to honour the Lord for the blessings he has received, is told instead that God will do even more for him. For sure, some of these promises were fulfilled during the reign of Solomon, especially with the building of the First Temple. We, of course, know that the house of the Lord finds its most lasting expression in the form of Mary, who becomes the Ark of the Covenant when she gives her answer to Gabriel. The establishment of David's line and the lineage that will live forever can only be found in the ever-living Son of God. How else can we read this passage of scripture except with wonder and grateful hearts? And what better way to prepare to reflect on the mysteries that we will celebrate again this Christmas!

Advent Traditions: The Great O Antiphons

As Christmas approaches so the spiritual focus of Advent turns towards the coming Feast of the Lord's Nativity. To heighten our anticipation, the Great O Antiphons appear in the Liturgy both at the Gospel Acclamation at Mass, and as the Magnificat antiphon at Evening Prayer. Each of the seven O Antiphons is a title ascribed to the coming Christ – titles taken out of the Scripture: O Wisdom, O Adonai, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Dayspring, O King of the Nations, and O Emmanuel. In each of these the identity of Christ is revealed, and his salvific mission disclosed. The longed-for hope of Israel is coming. These antiphons are presented in verse form in the Advent hymn, 'O come, O come Emmanuel.' Why not use that hymn text as a devotion in these latter days of Advent to make ready your heart for the coming of the Saviour.

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

24th December 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent



I am the handmaid of the Lord

Our Advent focus now turns to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the one who is to become the Mother of God. Mary has many virtues, but amongst her greatest is obedience. 'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me', she exclaimed at the Annunciation. 'I am yours', 'I am obedient to your will.' This is a lesson for us. Since the Enlightenment (arguably beforehand too) human thinking has put the self at the very centre of all we do, and all we do leads to a building up of the self. This is none other than the sin of pride. The corrective virtue is obedience – saying and then doing not what 'I' want, but what God wants. But how do we then know what God wants? – How do we know anything? We have to study the Scriptures and the teachings of the church, to listen to Jesus, and to apply that in every area of our lives. This Advent have the courage to stop and to say, with Mary, 'I have come to do your will'.

Today's Gospel: St. Luke 1: 26-38

Prayers to Remember

O Christ our God incarnate, whose Virgin mother was blessed in bearing you, but still more blessed in keeping your word; grant us, who honour the exaltation of her lowliness, to follow the example of her devotion to your will; for you are alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

William Bright (1824 – 1901)