



4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

Gracious God, may we come to recognise that with Mary, we are your favoured ones and that you desire to be with us. Increase our faith and put a new spirit in our hearts so that we can bear your word to the world in which we find ourselves. We ask this in your name. Amen

With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

READING

Once again, ask a number of people to read the Gospel Passage. Remember that God wants to speak to you through these words, so spend a little time in silence to grasp these words and hold them.

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, *'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his*

people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.*

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

Today, Mary is introduced to us, the young girl that is chosen to be the mother of Jesus. His birth is set in history, in time, and yet his birth had started long before, in the dream, the plan of God. From Genesis to Malachi, all the oracles and the prophets foretold his birth, into a humble, poor family, the House of David.

More than 600 years ago a Dominican mystic called Meister Eckhart of Hochhiem in Germany once said *'What good is it to me if Mary gave birth to the Son of God, fourteen hundred years ago, and I do not also give birth to the Son of God in my time and in my culture'.*

Do you agree with him? The gospel today tells us how it all started with Mary, how the angel came and how the light spread over her, and how she agreed to participate in God's plan. Mary's *'Yes'* puts everything in motion.

Can we say *'Yes'* to God, today in our time and our culture, to what he desires of us? What is preventing us?

How can we inform or influence others so that they too will say *'Yes'* to God's plan in their lives? Does the way we live, and love, give birth to Jesus in our time and culture today?

Mary, thank you for your humble *'Yes'* which brought you great joy and great sadness. But your abiding trust in the Father enabled you to face the world and

all its consequences. Help us to find that trust, in you, in your Son Jesus, and in our Father, so that we too may help to give birth to his life and love in our time and in our culture.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYER

Response: Come Lord Jesus

We await your coming, so with joyful hearts we pray

You became human and were born of Mary in a troubled land. Come and liberate all peoples' suffering oppression.

Come Lord Jesus

Lord, you faced the reality of death. Give courage and strength to all who are terminally ill and those who are close to them.

Come Lord Jesus

Jesus, you and your mother Mary showed us how to be more fully human in our giving to a needy world. May we share our gifts freely and willingly as you so often did.

Come Lord Jesus

Jesus, your death brought us the hope of resurrection. Grant new life to all who have died this day.

Come Lord Jesus

FINAL THOUGHT

As Meister Eckhart of Hochhiem in Germany once said, '*What good is it to me if Mary gave birth to the Son of God, fourteen hundred years ago, and I do not also give birth to the Son of God in my time and in my culture?*'

How can Jesus be born among us today?