



## Fourth Sunday of Advent † Sunday 23rd December 2018

Cycle of Prayer: Expectant mothers, migrants, refugees and human life  
Keynote: Let Christ enter into our lives!

### Prophet Micah 5: 1-4

The prophet, writing about the return of the exiles to the Temple mount in Jerusalem, and the beginning of the reign of God – the era of peace – also proclaims that the Messiah sent to save the people, will come from Bethlehem in Judea. *'You, (Bethlehem) Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old ...he will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord ...he himself will be peace'*. King Herod, who was curious about where in his kingdom this people's saviour might be born, was reminded by his Jewish learned experts about the prophecy by Micah, and they explained the significance of the city of Bethlehem, and how the Messiah – the Anointed of the Lord – *Christos* was to be born of the former royal household and tribe of David. The Christian faithful were from earliest times to make the connection with the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

**Responsorial Psalm 79 (80)** – A song of hope, longing for the return of God

### Letter to the Hebrews 10: 5-10

The words put into the mouth of Christ by the writer of this letter, come from one of the psalms – a psalm song that in former times may have been used at the royal coronations of the Kings of Israel. The words express the readiness of the chosen king to put himself totally at the service of God and of God's People. The words: *'God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will'*, are particularly apt for the mission and the person of Jesus. Indeed, maybe for us too. *'God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will'*.

### Gospel according to Luke 1: 39-45

Elsewhere in Luke's gospel narrative, the marginalised: the poor, the women, foreigners and the slaves, are shown by the evangelist as enjoying the Lord's special favour. Here today, the pious woman Elizabeth, filled with admiration at the handiwork of the Lord, is so moved with Messianic joy that in the very moment she hears Mary's greeting, *'Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit'* she proclaims of her cousin Mary: *'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb ...blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled'*. As we step into the season of Christmas we could do well to reflect upon this meeting, and the greeting, and what it might mean for us and for our world today. How God now specially favours us. *'Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Yes ...blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled'*. Spare a thought too, for the traveller, the homeless and those with child.

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Note: Christmas Season – The Solemnity of Christmas commences with Evening Prayer on Monday 24th December with the Mass of the Vigil of Christmas being celebrated that night.