



St. John's Parish
Roman Catholic Church

office@stjohnskitchener.ca
519 745 7855
85 Strange St., Kitchener

MAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - DECEMBER 22, 2024

The liturgy of this Fourth Sunday of Advent focuses on the figure of Mary, the Virgin Mother, expecting the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Let us fix our gaze upon her, a model of faith and of charity; and we can ask ourselves: what were her thoughts in the months while she was expecting? The answer comes precisely from today's Gospel passage, the narrative of Mary's visit to her elderly relative Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-45). The Angel Gabriel had revealed that Elizabeth was expecting a son and was already in her sixth month (cf. Lk 1:26, 36). So the Virgin, who had just conceived Jesus by the power of God, set out with haste for Nazareth, in Galilee, to reach the mountains of Judea, and visit her cousin.

The Gospel states: "she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth" (v. 40). Surely she congratulated her on her maternity, as in turn Elizabeth congratulated Mary, saying: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (vv. 42-43). And she immediately lauds Mary's faith: "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (v. 45). The contrast is obvious between Mary, who had faith, and Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, who doubted, and did not believe the angel's promise and therefore is left dumb until John's birth. It is a contrast.

This episode helps us to interpret the mystery of man's encounter with God in a very special light. An encounter that is not characterized by astonishing miracles, but rather, is characterized by faith and charity. Indeed, Mary is blessed because she believed: the encounter with God is the fruit of faith. Zechariah, however, who doubted and did not believe, was left deaf and dumb. To grow in faith during the long silence: without faith one remains inevitably deaf to the consoling voice of God; and incapable of speaking words of consolation and hope to our brothers and sisters. We see it every day: when people who have no faith, or who have very little faith, have to approach a person who is suffering, they speak words suited to the occasion, but they do not manage to touch the heart because they have no strength. They have no strength because they have no faith, and if they have no faith they do not find the words that can touch others' hearts. Faith, in its turn, is nourished by charity. The Evangelist recounts that "Mary arose and went with haste" (v. 39) to Elizabeth: with haste, not with distress, not anxiously, but with haste, in peace. "She arose": a gesture full of concern. She could have stayed at home to prepare for the birth of her son, but instead she takes care of others before herself, showing through her deeds that she is already a disciple of that Lord whom she carries in her womb. The event of Jesus' birth began in this way, with a simple gesture of charity; after all, authentic charity is always the fruit of God's love.

The Gospel passage about Mary's visit to Elizabeth, which we heard at Mass today, prepares us to experience Christmas properly, by communicating to us the dynamism of faith and charity. This dynamism is the work of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of Love who made Mary's virginal womb fruitful and who spurred her to hasten to the service of her elderly relative. A dynamism full of joy, as seen in the encounter between the two mothers, which is entirely a hymn of joyful exultation in the Lord, who does great things with the little ones who trust in him.

May the Virgin Mary obtain for us the grace to experience an 'extroverted' Christmas, but not a scattered one: extroverted. May our 'I' not be at the centre, but rather the 'You' of Jesus and the 'you' of brothers and sisters, especially of those who need a hand. Then we will leave room for the Love that, even today, seeks to become flesh and to come to dwell in our midst.

ENGLISH SCHEDULE

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Saturday, December 21 5:00 PM
+Janet Silver +Stella Dombroskie

Sunday, December 22 9:00 AM
For All Parishioners Living & Deceased

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR'S ENGLISH MASSES SCHEDULE

Tuesday, December 24 5:00 PM
The Nativity of the Lord—Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 25 9:00 AM
The Nativity of the Lord—Christmas Day
For the Sick & Shut-ins of our Parish

Thursday, December 26 11:00 AM
Saint Stephen
+Mike Simms

Friday, December 27 11:00 AM
Saint John the Evangelist

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

Saturday, December 28 5:00 PM
+Janet Silver

Sunday, December 29 9:00 AM

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

Tuesday, December 31 5:00 PM

Wednesday, January 1, 2025 9:00 AM

HORARIOS EN ESPAÑOL

IV Domingo de Adviento

Sabado 21 de diciembre 7:00 PM
Domingo 22 de diciembre 11:00 AM
Domingo 22 de diciembre 1:00 PM
Por la Comunidad Parroquial

HORARIO DE MISAS EN ESPAÑOL NAVIDAD Y FIN DE AÑO

Martes 24 de Diciembre 7:00 PM
Natividad del Señor Misa de la Noche

Miércoles 25 de Diciembre 11:00 AM & 1:00PM
Natividad del Señor Misa del Día

Jueves 26 de Diciembre 12:00 PM
San Esteban

Viernes 27 de Diciembre 12:00 PM
San Juan, Evangelista

La Sagrada Familia de Jesús, María & José

Sábado 28 de Diciembre 7:00 PM

Domingo 29 de Diciembre 11:00 AM & 1:00PM

Solemnidad de María Santísima, Madre de Dios

Martes 31 de Diciembre 7:00 PM

Miércoles 1 de Enero, 2025 11:00 AM & 1:00PM

PILGRIMS OF HOPE: Pope Francis has declared 2025 to be a Jubilee Year for the entire Church. We are invited to experience in a profound way the transforming power of God's mercy and forgiveness, and a renewal of our faith and commitment to love God and our neighbour as God has first loved us.

The theme for Jubilee 2025 is "Pilgrims of Hope". In our world suffering from the impacts of war, the ongoing effects of COVID-19, the climate crisis, economic hardships, and countless afflictions of mind, body and spirit, Pope Francis is inviting us to rekindle the hope which is rooted in our faith: our sure hope which never disappoints.

The Beginning of the Jubilee is on the Feast of the Holy Family, December 29, 2024.

[His Excellency, Bishop Crosby is pleased to greet you all with Jubilee News from the Diocese of Hamilton:](#)

PILGRIM CHURCHES IN THE DIOCESE: Part of the Jubilee experience is to make a pilgrimage to sacred places, where prayer is offered, the Sacraments are celebrated, and a plenary indulgence can be obtained for the remission of punishment due to our sins.

In our Diocese, Bishop Crosby has designated six pilgrimage churches – one in each Deanery, which will welcome pilgrims during the coming year and mark this year with special events.

More information to come!

MERRY CHRISTMAS! May our Saviour, born for us, bless all the members of our parish, our relatives and friends. Happy New Year and you can always count on prayers here in your parish. With prayers,

F. Crosby