



Martin Bird's Prayers for Monday 21st to Sunday 27th December 2020

Monday (O Oriens)

Reading – Luke Chapter 1, verses 39 to 45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!"

Lord God, as we continue to go towards the day of great celebration, we join with Mary and celebrate along with her. She was truly blessed among women, and her child was the blessed Jesus, your Son. Thank you that you favoured Mary, and she did not hesitate to agree to do your will in her life. May we too do your will in our lives, and, like Mary, do so without hesitation, so that the good news of Christmas may spread throughout this world. In your name, Amen

Tuesday (O Rex Gentium)

Reading – Luke Chapter 1, verses 46 – 56

Mary's Song

And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Lord God, may our souls, as Mary's did, glorify you and may our spirit rejoice in you, God our Saviour. Just as you were mindful of Mary, so we know that, despite everything that may be going on in the world today, you are still, and always will be, mindful of us, your followers. Thank you for that mindfulness, and for showing us your mercy. Help us to be like Mary, and never stop worshipping you – may our whole lives be a Magnificat to you, a true song of praise to the one who saves, our Lord God who came to earth in the person of Jesus to save us all. In your great name we pray, Amen

Wednesday (O Emmanuel)

Reading – Luke Chapter 1, verses 57 to 66

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.” They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.” Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbours were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

Lord God, we thank you today for the birth of John, who came to bear witness to Jesus and to prepare his way. We thank you for the faith of Elizabeth and Zechariah – the faith that meant they bought him up to be who he had to be, who you had planned for him to be. May we hear your words afresh, that John came to prepare the way for Jesus, and, in so doing, prepare the way for Jesus in our own lives and in our hearts, and also in the lives and hearts of those we know. Amen

Thursday (Christmas Eve)

Reading – Luke Chapter 1, verses 67 to 79

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us - to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

On this Christmas eve, we thank you that you sent Jesus to us on Earth to show your tender mercy to all, and to shine the one true light on all of us, living in darkness and to guide our feet into the path of peace. John prepare the way for Jesus – may we come to him this Christmas time and know the light and peace of Christ afresh once more. In doing this, may we too be ready to spread your good news far and wide so that more and more people may come to know the real meaning of Christmas for themselves and turn to Christ in their lives. Amen.

Friday (Christmas Day)

Reading – Luke Chapter 2, verses 1 to 7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Lord God, we thank you, this Christmas Day, for the wonderful birth of your Son Jesus in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago. We thank you that he was put in a manger, showing us the humble, servant King he was to become, and we thank you that you sent Him to us to save us all. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your birth this day – a birth that means we have so much hope because you are the ultimate hope. Let us celebrate this hope, singing glory to the new born King – Jesus Christ, our King and our Saviour. Amen

Saturday (Stephen)

Reading – Luke Chapter 2, verses 8 to 20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Lord Jesus, the shepherds were the first to know who you were. These shepherds, who would have been the lowest of the low in those days, were the first to hear those wonderful words, “a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” May we hear those words once more, as if it is the first time we have heard them, and revel in the wonder of their meaning. Thank you that the shepherds were chosen first, and that they had no hesitation in coming to see you for themselves and confirming to Mary and Joseph what they already knew. May we, like Mary, treasure the shepherds’ message and ponder that message for ourselves. And may we be like the shepherds, glorifying and praising God for all the things we hear once more – A Saviour has been born for us, and he is the Messiah, the Lord. Amen

Sunday (Christmas 1/John the Evangelist)

Reading – John Chapter 1, verses 1 to 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Lord God, we know the words of John Chapter 1 so well, sometimes we can take them for granted. Help us to know them in our hearts once more and know their importance to us and to our faith. Jesus was there in the beginning of everything, before he came down to save us. God made everything and in you is life itself. Jesus came to be the light of the world, and darkness cannot overcome his light. When he came to the world, most of the world refused to know him and his own likewise. But we also know, because of these words of John's gospel, those who did receive him received the right to be called the children of God, and that is what we all are. Thank you Lord Jesus that because of you, because you became flesh and lived among us, we too can call ourselves children of God. May we too behold your glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Amen