

The Gathering – first video

Welcome - [OLIVER]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

That greeting, which we use at every mass at the Cathedral, might seem strange said outside of church. Many might wonder what you meant by it.

An angel gives a peculiar greeting in today's gospel—one that shocks its hearer: 'God is with you.' Indeed, this notion is something that surprises people still today. But God is with us—no matter who we are or where we've come from. You're in good company.

Welcome to St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow.

Collect for Purity - [SHONA]

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Confession

[KELVIN] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[OLIVER] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

KYRIE- [OLIVER]

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect - [OLIVER]

Here in our midst, O God of mystery, you disclose the secret, hidden for countless ages. For you we wait; for you we listen. Upon hearing your voice may we, like Mary, embrace your will and become a dwelling fit for your Word. Grant this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Ministry of the Word – second video

GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38 – [DEANNA]

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord

is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Sermon [KELVIN]

One of the interesting things that has developed during Covidtime for St Mary’s is our online coffee hour on a Sunday lunchtime at 1 pm. Sometimes it is an open discussion about something and at other times it is a time to listen to someone talking about something they are passionate about.

Last week we had a great time listening to a member of the congregation, Debbie Lewer, who teaches Art History talking about different ways of thinking about this week’s gospel reading though looking at ways that the Annunciation has been portrayed in art. It was absolutely fascinating.

One of the pictures particularly caught my eye. It is a tryptich – three paintings that form one work of art that would had once been

placed above an altar. It is now in the Cloisters Museum in New York – part of the Metropolitan Museum collection.

I love the colour and the vibrancy of the picture very much and talking about it made me want to go and see it.

If Covid hadn't happened I was supposed to have been in America for a couple of months on sabbatical this autumn. As I looked at this painting I thought that maybe I'll get to see it in real life if I do get away on sabbatical next year.

In our conversation last week, Debbie asked me what I could see in the painting and the first thing that caught my eye was a couple of things hanging at the back of the painting.

Firstly what I thought was a towel and secondly a curiously placed pot, hanging just above Gabriel's head.

I had thought that maybe the towel was some kind of reference to the towel that Jesus would eventually wash feet with but when I looked closer during the week I saw that it was a piece of cloth with fringes. Much more likely I think, to be a prayer shawl with the traditional fringes hanging down. It is perhaps there to remind us that this was a devout Jewish home.

But the pot kind of bugged me.

I kept coming back to it and looking at it. And it bugged me because I think it is there to express a bit of bad theology.

(There's some other dodgy theology going on in the painting too but let's focus on that prominently placed empty cooking pot for now).

The pot is there, I suspect, to remind people of an idea that has sometimes been put about in theological circles plenty of times that Mary was an empty vessel just waiting to be filled.

In that view of the annunciation and the incarnation, God seems to be just waiting for a suitable vessel to come along and Mary is just such a vessel.

Empty. There to be filled up. Like an empty house waiting for someone to move in.

Useful to be sure. Elegant and beautiful maybe. But just an empty vessel at the end of the day.

It is bad theology because of its misogyny. And bad theology that is very much in conflict with the text of the Annunciation story that we've heard read.

Mary is not simply an empty pot that gets filled up with God's Word. She's very much an active participant.

Another thing that I find very suspicious about the painting in the triptych is that Mary seems to be ignoring the angel. Gabriel is doing all the work and Mary is just reading her book.

She's not even looking at the angel. She is passive. God is active.

But again, this doesn't align with the story.

Now, this is a woman with a mind. This is a woman with a song to sing. This is a woman who was to teach her Son to topple tyrants and fill the hungry with good things and pay no attention to people because of their wealth.

She's not the silent type.

Nor the type to ignore an angel.

In the gospel, Mary is engaged in conversation. She's a participant. She says yes.

It is the gospel Mary rather than the tryptich Mary whom I think we take as our model here in this cathedral dedicated to her.

There's justice still to be done.

There's tyrants to be toppled and tyrannies to be challenged.

There's a whole world to turn upside down.

And our current situation – Covidtime has shone a spotlight on the kind of society we live in.

Covid isn't an angel but it has certainly been a messenger.

More people have suffered and died in this country than would have done had we had a more equitable society and had systemic injustices such as racism and poverty been challenged.

As we think about the future, let us be haunted by the realisation that normal (the world that we thought was normal) wasn't working anyway.

But we're not the silent types. We too have a song to sing.

At our most recent Vestry meeting we had business to do to keep the church running. But that went alongside reporting on letters that we've written on behalf of the congregation urging the church to do more to challenge the hostile environment policy that our government has towards asylum seekers. And another one looking for language for the liturgy that better includes those who identify as non-binary.

The worship of God all muddled up with putting the world to rights. That's the song we have to sing. That's a song that we've learned from the woman whose name we bear here.

Let us never be silent.

Let us never be passive, just waiting for God to do all the work.

God has loved the world enough for us to know that we too can say yes to speaking and singing and acting in God's name to wipe every tear from every eye.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Intercessions [ROBERT]

With Mary and Joseph, we wait and pray. We bring to You, the one True God, our hopes for the world and its people.

Within our community of Glasgow, we pray for all recycling and ecological projects. We pray for preparations being made for the COP26 summit next year. We pray that we may be good stewards of your world

We pray for the many poorer communities of the world, whose lives are threatened by Covid, and whose livelihoods are at risk because of their economic powerlessness. May we worship, with Mary, the God who 'fills the hungry with good things.'

We pray for neighbours and loved ones who prepare to celebrate Christmas—some physically with family and friends, others separated from loved ones. We pray for joy in the festive season for all—for those who carry fears at this time and for those full of joy today.

We pray for your church throughout the world in its mission to bring hope. Within the Diocese of Glasgow we pray for: Bishop Kevin; for the Diocesan Centre Staff, Christine Hughes, Iolanthe Stack and Marion Noble; for the churches of St Oswald's King's Park and St Ninian's Pollockshields.

We live in faith as a community that goes beyond death. In our Year's Mind we pray today for Frances Dove and for James Runcieman.

May they rest in peace **and rise in glory.**

As we wait with Mary and Joseph, may we learn what to hope for and learn how to pray. Holy God, we wait and pray.

Amen.

Communion – third video

Offertory - [OLIVER]

The phrase 'let it be' has two vastly different meanings. You might say 'let it be' and mean 'leave it alone' or 'let whatever's going to happen happen'. That, however, couldn't be further from what Mary's answer to the angel indicated. Mary didn't step out of the way. She didn't wait to see what would happen.

Mary actively participated in God's plan, and that's what people—following in her footsteps—have attempted to do as servants of the Lord ever since. They've said 'yes' to a higher call, joining the work of bringing about God's Kingdom.

If you haven't already, I invite you to become involved with the mission of God's Church as it is expressed in this place by making a financial pledge. Visit www.thecathedral.org.uk and click 'DONATE TO ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL'. Thanks to everyone who plays a part.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in
heaven and on earth is yours.**

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

Eucharistic Prayer - [OLIVER]

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, Father,
in every place and at all times.

Worship and praise belong to you, God our maker.

Out of nothing, you called all worlds to be,
and still you draw the universe to its fulfilment.

Dawn and evening celebrate your glory
till time shall be no more.

In Christ your Son
the life of heaven and earth were joined,
sealing the promise of a new creation,
given, yet still to come.

Taught by your Spirit,
we who bear your threefold likeness
look for the City of Peace
in whose light we are transfigured
and the earth transformed.

As children of your redeeming purpose
who await the coming of your Son,
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you,
most loving Father.

In Jesus you showed us yourself.
Our hope is built on him,
the first, the last, the living one.

Obedient, even to accepting death,
He opened the gate of glory
and calls us now to share the life of heaven.

Before he was given up to suffering and death,
alight with the vision of a feast
that heralded a kingdom yet to come,
at supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.

He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat.
This is my Body: it is broken for you."
After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:
"Drink this, all of you.
This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,
that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in remembrance of me."

**We now obey your Son's command.
We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts**

**and with them ourselves,
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love
until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

Lord's Prayer - [KELVIN]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Communion - [OLIVER]

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds
that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and
was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be
gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for
yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.
Amen.

Music at Communion - [CHRISTINE]

No wind at the window, no knock on the door
No light from the lamp stand, no foot on the floor
No dream born of tiredness, no ghost raised by fear
Just an angel and a woman and a voice in her ear

Oh, Mary, Oh, Mary, don't hide from my face
Be glad that you're favored and filled with God's grace
The time for redeeming the world has begun
And you are requested to mother God's son

This child must be born that the Kingdom might come
Salvation for many, destruction for some
Both end and beginning, both message and sign
Both victor and victim, both yours and divine

No payment was promised, no promises made
No wedding was dated, no blueprint displayed
Yet Mary, consenting to what none could guess
Replied with conviction, "Tell God I say yes."

Post Communion Prayer - [SHONA]

Faithful God, in this sacrament we receive the promise of salvation. May we, like the Virgin Mary, be obedient to your will. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing - [OLIVER]

Thanks to everyone who's contributed to today's worship, from all kinds of places in all kinds of ways. If you want to find out more about the activities happening at the Cathedral this Christmastime, visit www.thecathedral.org.uk. There, you'll also find ways of getting in touch.

The angel said, 'Nothing will be impossible with God.' Let nothing feel hopeless for us this holy season.

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and illuminate your path; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Voluntary - [STEVEN]

‘Es ist ein Ros entsprungen’ – Johannes Brahms

Picture during Sermon

Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece) ca 1427–32

Workshop of Robert Campin Netherlandish

Metropolitan Museum, New York

A hymn and materials for Young Church are available on the online worship page at www.thecathedral.org.uk/worship.

There is an online coffee hour on Sunday at 1 pm. Details in the weekly congregational email. Sign up for emails at www.thecathedral.org.uk