

4th Sunday of Advent – 22nd December 2024

Headings	Gospel (Luke 1:39-45)	First Reading (Micah 5:1-4)	Second Reading (Hebrews 10:5-10)
Context	Today's gospel follows the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary at whose word she conceived. Mary set out in haste travelling to the hill country to find her kinswoman Elizabeth who was pregnant also.	Micah was a prophet and the author of the book of Micah. He is considered one of the twelve minor prophets and was a contemporary of the prophets Amos, Isaiah and Hosea. In this passage he prophesies the birth of Jesus.	In the early verses of this chapter the author explains that Old Testament sacrifices did not take away sin. He quotes two verses from Psalm 40 to show that the sacrifice of Jesus forgave sins by the fact that Jesus offered himself freely to the Father. Jesus came to do his Father's will even to the point of death.
Key verse	"Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord?"	"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"	"Here I am. I am coming to obey your will. He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once and for all by Jesus "
Key themes/ messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary hastens to visit Elizabeth so that she may see that nothing is impossible for God. • At the sound of Mary's greeting the infant leaped in Elizabeth's womb. • Elizabeth and the child in her womb are given enormous joy. • For us on this day through the liturgy we are drawn into this mystery in an even deeper way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Micah's prophecy he tells us that this new king will be different from the ones who have gone before. • He will be one to rule over Israel in a new way as was prophesied. • He will care for his people as a shepherd cares for his flock. • His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus was willing to suffer and die on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. • This is a form of worship more pleasing to the Lord than offering the flesh and blood of animals in the Temple. • Jesus was completely free from sin and always did his father's will. • The priestly offering of his body and blood is the perfect sacrifice that replaces all others.
Questions/ application to our lives	What is your priority in preparing for the celebration of Christmas? Do you give more time to decoration and food rather than spiritual preparation? What would a good spiritual preparation consist of?	How can you link the birth of Jesus to the promises in this passage? How can the promises in this passage be fulfilled in the world today? How can these promises help you in the celebration of Christmas?	The Church invites us to offer our suffering in union with those of Christ. Describe some of the blessings that follow when we offer our sufferings in this way. At what point of the mass is it most appropriate to offer our sufferings and join with the offering of Jesus?
Further reading	<i>Catechism 148, 523, 717, 495, 2676-2677</i>	<i>Catechism 64, 201, 522-524, 702, 764, 1095</i>	<i>Catechism 462, 606-607, 2568, 2581, 2595, 2824,</i>