



Father Paul Writes - 22nd of December, 2024

I welcome you all as we gather today on this fourth Sunday of Advent with just a few days to go to Christmas Day, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

We do live in a very logical society where we often want proof. Well, the proof of Jesus coming into the world was foretold by numerous prophets of the Old Testament. One of the readings we hear this morning from the prophet Micah, written about 700 years before Christ, deals with the Messiah's human origins. He will come from the village of Bethlehem, from the small and insignificant clan of Ephrathah. The importance of this prophecy is that, with the Messiah, as with all people, greatness comes from God rather than human sources.

Curiously though, we are a people of belief. We place our trust in surgeons, and we act on the advice of certain persons. We recognise too that human relationships require a certain amount of trust and self-surrender. In the Gospel reading for today, we hear of Mary seeking solitude and refuge in the home of her cousin Elizabeth. It's helpful to recall the enthusiasm and excitement of their greeting: the child Jesus in Mary's womb 'leaped' for joy and Elizabeth was 'filled with the Holy Spirit'. Their shared humour comes from her confidence that in their unexpected pregnancies, God is at work. They relied solely on their belief that God's word would be fulfilled and trusted in and surrendered to that word.

The incarnation though is more than a past historical event in which Mary and Elizabeth participated. God's presence among us, is continued by the power of the Spirit. Our own participation in God's work of salvation places us in a long line of followers of Christ who believe, do God's will and offer themselves for the good of others. In this, we discover our own blessedness.

I hope that you will be able to experience God's presence this Christmas as we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, starting tonight with the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at 7 pm. This is a great way to enter into the spirit of Christmas, to hear how God worked through the people of Israel and ultimately for all people in God's Son being born as an infant and living as one of us. It is also a time to sing some favourite carols and to hear the choir too!

On Christmas Eve on Tuesday, a 5 pm a Children's Service will be held. This is for everyone young and old and with families. It can be an opportunity also for grandparents to invite their grandchildren along to share the Christmas story. There will be carols, the setting up of the nativity and decorating the Christmas tree, an activity making a Christingle for Christmas Day and a children's talk.

That night at 11 pm there will be a Midnight Mass with Carols. Then on Christmas Day, there will be a Sung Eucharist at 9 am. This is a service again for the whole family. The services will be as normal on Sunday the 29th of December at 8 am (BCP) and at 10 am (APBA). Both services will continue to celebrate the season of Christmas but with a focus on the family of Jesus Christ.

Please take a copy of the Christmas edition of the Glen Osmond Anglican magazine in the Narthex. Please take a copy to someone you would like to invite to church this Christmas or to give to someone with whom you are in touch. Also at the back of the church are paperback copies of St Luke's Gospel. Luke is the Gospel we will concentrate on over the next year, so grab a copy for yourself to read or to give to someone else as a gift. They have been produced by the Anglican Church as we prepare to take part in Hope25 next year.

Thank you to Katy Phillips and all who assisted in making the Christmas craft fair a success on Wednesday. There was plenty to do for pre-school and primary school children in making Christmas decorations and Christian symbols and sharing a BBQ lunch, cakes and ice blocks. There was also an opportunity to decorate the Christmas tree in the church with their own decorations.

The ABM through its subsidiary, Anglicans in Development, has launched an emergency appeal for the people of Vanuatu, hit by an earthquake., The appeal will focus on the provision of clean drinking water and food. The ABM is working with the Anglican Church of Melanesia in providing this relief effort. \$32.00 will provide a carton of 1.5 litres of water, \$68.00 for a food relief package. There will be counselling supplied as well, with 10 volunteer counsellors being deployed. \$800.00 will fund one volunteer. The appeal is tax deductible. You can donate at <https://www.abmission.org/appeals>

Your friend and priest

Paul