**Blessed Be the Lord**

Today’s readings invite us to open our hearts to receive with joy God’s promise and gift of salvation. The Gospel focuses on the song-prayer of Zechariah, known as the Benedictus (Latin for “blessed”). This is the first utterance that came forth from Zechariah’s lips when he regained his speech after a period of temporary muteness. For nine months he was unable to say a word, from the time he met the angel Gabriel to the circumcision of the child whom Zechariah and Elizabeth named John. Upon confirming through writing that the child is to be called John, the old man’s tongue was loosed: he began to speak, blessing God.

Zechariah blessed God for the latter’s acts of salvation and for displays of faithfulness and mercy. The new father spoke of God’s solicitude, visitation, and redemption of his people, of his faithfulness to his promise, of showing mercy and remembering his covenant. Zechariah also anticipated God’s act of liberation that would enable the same people to worship in freedom, holiness, and righteousness. This is the hope expressed in Zechariah’s song, a hope that is based on God’s promise to Abraham and to David.

God’s promise to David is recalled in the First Reading. When David thought of building a house for the Lord, the Lord responded that it will not be David who will build a house for the Lord, rather it is the Lord who will build a house for David. The Lord declared: “I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without disturbance; the wicked shall not continue to afflict them; they shall rest from their enemies.” The Lord promises peace and security for his people, and to David, the Lord promises an everlasting kingdom. The Lord ensures that the house of David will endure forever, for there will be an offspring to succeed him.

The Lord’s covenant and promise to David, celebrated in the Responsorial Psalm, is recalled in the Benedictus, which is not just a song or a prayer, but a prophecy. Zechariah spoke of the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s promise to David: “He has raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of David.” The birth of John becomes the occasion for Zechariah’s proclamation of the coming of the Savior. In Luke’s narrative context, the birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ, happens six months after John was born.

Zechariah offers a joyous welcome for his newborn child. The father’s prophecy reveals the identity and mission of his child: John will be called the prophet of the Most High, preparing the way of the Lord. This too is our mission. Let us prepare for the Lord’s coming by working together to establish conditions where people are freed from fear and anxiety; where we can speak the truth with love, engage in dialogue, and act on behalf of justice and peace without being threatened by the powers-that-be; where we can stand with—and be the voice of—the weak and the defenseless in a society that privileges the elite and the powerful. Perhaps, then, we can rejoice as the dawn from on high breaks upon us, as his light shines in our darkness, as Jesus leads us from the shadows of death to the way of peace.

Sr. Anicia Co, RVM
**Gloria**

All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**Collect**

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Come quickly, Lord Jesus, do not delay! We entrust ourselves to your love: strengthen us by your coming and raise us up, you who live and reign with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All — Amen.

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**THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading**

[2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16] (Sat)

David wants to build God a house, where the Lord can stay close to his people. But God says it is he who will build a “house,” that is, a lasting dynasty, for David, from which the Messiah will come.

**A reading from the Second Book of Samuel**

WHEN King David was settled in his palace, and the Lord had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!” Nathan answered the king, “Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the Lord is with you.” But that night the Lord spoke to Nathan and said: “Go, tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Should you build me a house to dwell in?’

“It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his Kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your Kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.”

— The word of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.

**Responsorial Psalm (Ps 89)**

R — For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

sr. m.c.a. parco, fsp


1. The favors of the Lord I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”; in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. (R)

2. I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have
sworn to David my servant:/
Forever will I confirm your posternity/ and establish your
throne for all generations.” (R)

3. “He shall say of me, ‘You are my father,/ my God, the
rock, my savior.’/ Forever I will maintain my kindness toward
him,/ and my covenant with him stands firm.” (R)

Alleluia (Stand)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. O
Radiant Dawn, splendor of
eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who
dwell in darkness and in the
dream of death. Alleluia,
alleluia.

Gospel (Lk 1:67-79)
P — A reading from the holy
Gospel according to Luke
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

ZECHARIAH his father,
filled with the Holy Spirit,
 prophesied, saying: “Blessed
be the Lord, the God of Israel;
for he has come to his people
and set them free. He has
raised up for us a mighty
Savior, born of the house of
his servant David. Through
his prophesies he promised of
old that he would save us
from our enemies, from the
hands of all who hate us. He
promised to show mercy to
our fathers and to remember
his holy covenant. This was the
oath he swore to our father
Abraham: to set us free from
the hand of our enemies, free
to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life. You,
my child, shall be called the
prophet of the Most High, for
you will go before the Lord to
prepare his way, to give his
people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.
In the tender compassion of
our God the dawn from on
high shall break upon us, to
shine on those who dwell in
darkness and the shadow of
death, and to guide our feet
into the way of peace.”

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus
Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Prayer of the Faithful (Stand)
P — The almighty Father is
faithful to his promise. With
confidence we present to him
our needs, as we pray:
R — Faithful Lord, hear us.
C — Banish fear, hatred,
anxiety, and attachment to sin
from our hearts. We pray: (R)
C — Give strength to the
waving, comfort to the
troubled, and joy to all. We
pray: (R)
C — Give light, wisdom,
and strength to our religious
and political leaders. We pray: (R)
C — Rescue those unjustly
derived of liberty and those
marginalized and abandoned
by society. We pray: (R)
C — Bless our families and
loved ones as we are about
to celebrate your birth. We
pray: (R)
C — Let us pray for the urgent
concerns of our community
and our personal intentions
(parase), we pray: (R)
P — Faithful God, help us to
be strong and patient in our
difficulties. May we never lose
hope in your promise. We ask
this through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Presentation of the Gifts
(Stand)
P — Pray, brethren...
All — May the Lord accept the
sacrifice at your hands for the
praise and glory of his name,
for our good and the good of
all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings
P — Graciously accept, O
Lord, the gifts we offer, that
our partaking of them may
free us from sin and purify our
hearts for the glorious coming
of your Son, who lives and
reigns for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

Preface (Advent II)
P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the
Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the
Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give
you thanks, Lord, holy Father,
almighty and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.

For all the oracles of the
prophets foretold him, the
Virgin Mother longed for him
with love beyond all telling,
John the Baptist sang of his
coming and proclaimed his
presence when he came.

It is by his gift that already
we rejoice at the mystery of his
Nativity, so that he may find us
watchful in prayer and exultant
in his praise.

And so, with Angels and
Archangels, with Thrones and
Dominions, and with all the
hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:
All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of hosts. 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.
(Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All — We proclaim your Death,
O Lord, and profess your
Resurrection until you come
again.

The Communion Rite

The Lord’s Prayer

All — Our Father...
P — Deliver us, Lord...
All — For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion
(Kneel)
P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon
(Lk 1:68)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel! He has visited his people and redeemed them.

Prayer after Communion
(Sand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

You have renewed us, Lord, by these wonderful gifts. As we prepare for the mystery of Christ’s birth, grant that we may rejoice in his gift of eternal life.

We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord.

All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P — Bow down for the blessing. (Pause)

May the almighty and merciful God, by whose grace you have placed your faith in the First Coming of his Only Begotten Son and yearn for his coming again, sanctify you by the radiance of Christ’s Advent and enrich you with his blessing.

All — Amen.

P — As you run the race of this present life, may he make you firm in faith, joyful in hope, and active in charity.

All — Amen.

P — So that, rejoicing now with devotion at the Redeemer’s coming in the flesh, you may be endowed with the rich reward of eternal life when he comes again in majesty.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (1) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go in peace.

All — Thanks be to God.

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Excerpts from the Urbi et Orbi Message
Vatican City, Christmas 2018

My wish for a happy Christmas is a wish for fraternity.

Fraternity among individuals of every nation and culture.

Fraternity among people with different ideas, yet capable of respecting and listening to one another.

Fraternity among persons of different religions.

Jesus came to reveal the face of God to all those who seek him.

The face of God has been revealed in a human face. It did not appear in an angel, but in one man born in a specific time and place. By his incarnation, the Son of God tells us that salvation comes through love, acceptance, respect for this poor humanity of ours, which we all share in a greater variety of races, languages, and cultures. Yet all of us are brothers and sisters in humanity! Our differences, then, are not a detriment or a danger; they are a source of richness.

As when an artist is about to make a mosaic: it is better to have tiles of many colors available, rather than just a few!

The experience of families teaches us this: as brothers and sisters, we are all different from each other. We do not always agree, but there is an unbreakable bond uniting us, and the love of our parents helps us to love one another. The same is true for the larger human family, but here, God is our “parent”, the foundation and strength of our fraternity.

Pope Francis

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Sambuhay Mission Appeal
Be a mission partner for Sambuhay!

Sambuhay Missalette and Sambuhay TV now offer you a chance to reach its nearly a million readers and viewers. We share our “sacred space” for

- Vocation promotions,
- Invitations from Catholic communities and other groups,
- Announcements for special programs and activities,
- Local and international pilgrimages,
- Other church and faith-based matters.

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