



The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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Homily at Mass 4th Sunday of Advent Year B – 20 December 2020

The electronic sign at the intersection of Glenhuntly and Grange Roads is counting down to Christmas – day by day, hour by hour, even down to the minute. With the Angel's visit to Mary at Nazareth, and his invitation from God, you and I know that time is quickly passing – the time, the hour will soon arrive when the Son of God will be born amongst us in the poor stable at Bethlehem, laid in the animals' food trough, kept warm by the breath of the animals housed in the cave in the midst of a cold winter.

The Annunciation to Our Lady is the first of 8 magnificent German made windows in St Anthony's Church. The Holy Spirit overshadows the scene, caught as if by photograph. Mary is shown at prayer, a book – probably the Scriptures – open at her left shoulder. A lily in flower suggests her purity and virginity. Above her hovers St Gabriel – a magnificent archangel holding a scepter crowned around with a fleur-de-lys, another symbol of Our Lady, the French lily. The window is brilliant, colourful, and glorious – suggesting all the wonder we feel at this key moment in the world's history.

Gabriel's mission is to be a messenger from God. He is certainly the Angel of Christmas – St Luke tells of his visit to Zachariah, John the Baptist's father, in the temple at Jerusalem. Tradition also suggests that St Gabriel led the angelic choir, passing on the good news of the Saviour's birth to the shepherds. Today's Gospel includes us in the conversation between Gabriel and Our Lady – his gentle invitation, her considered response, and Mary's generous, wholehearted 'Yes'. "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me". The stage is now set. The marvelous events of Christmas are about to begin. We behold Mary and Joseph kneeling before the altar and with them we wait ... Jesus is to be born amongst us.

King David hoped to build a magnificent temple as a national shrine of the God of Israel. He sourced the best materials – fine timbers, gold, magnificent fabrics, stone hewn by top notch craftsmen. But God stayed his hand – David wouldn't build the temple; his son Solomon would complete the building. But the Jerusalem Temple would never match the beauty of the building that God would craft for his Son – the person of the Virgin Mary, and her blessed womb in which Christ would take flesh and grow and from whom he would be born.

Catholics and Orthodox Christians have an instinctive love for Our Lady – a love that we learn from her Son, a reverence we learn from St Joseph, a devotion handed on to us by our teachers and parents. The Litany speaks of her as Mother, Virgin, Queen. In the closing days of Vatican II Pope Paul VI took the initiative and proclaimed Mary Mother of the Church.

As we look to Mary, kneeling beside St Joseph, we contemplate the mystery of Christmas with her, the mystery of the Word made flesh, the Son of God Incarnate, Emmanuel: God-with-us.

And together we pray:

Hail Mary ...