



# THE LORD'S DAY

4th Sunday of Advent (Year C)

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly newsletter as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at our Catholic Mass each Sunday. Watermead began in 1992 as a voice for people who wish to share understanding of living their faith through their various God-given gifts and talents. We frame these gifts by publishing them as books, cards and resources - and we record and publish the music. We also arrange retreats and pilgrimages.

For information about the work of our apostolate, to download our resources or to offer newsletter contributions, do feel welcome to contact us at:

Watermead Apostolate, The Watermead Centre, c/o St. Joseph's, 12 Goodwood Road, Leicester LE5 6SG : Telephone 0044 (0)116 220 7881 / 7880  
Download newsletters from [www.watermead-apostolate.com](http://www.watermead-apostolate.com) Contact us via the **Contact us Page** on our shop website [www.watermeadshop.co.uk](http://www.watermeadshop.co.uk)

## First Reading

*Micah 5 : 1-4*

The prophet's name is similar to "Michael" and means the same; "Who is like God" His home was at Moresheth, about twenty miles south west of Jerusalem, and he seems to have written about the same time as Isaiah and Jeremiah (approximately 716-687 BC).

The book opens with warnings for Israel about their crimes against God. Samaria will become a ruin and Jerusalem is under threat; the rich have forgotten their duties to the poor (Micah seems to have been of peasant stock) and they are inviting disaster; rulers have failed the people and false prophets have deceived them.

Micah accepts the taunts of the people, unafraid, because he can look forward to the Day of the Lord which he explains in a beautiful passage at the beginning of chapter four. He promises that the Lord will rescue the people from siege, exile and the power of the pagans - and new promise will come from Bethlehem, David's city. Today's lyrical passage is the promise: "From David's line, from the chosen woman, the Messiah will come".

### TRUE WORSHIP

Micah and Hebrews say that God wants our hearts - not empty gestures.

This week I shall visit ~  
in person, by phone, by letter.

## Questions of Faith

**The Christmas Stories** There are two ~ by Matthew and by Luke. Matthew's story centres on Joseph and the pain and bewilderment he suffers in the mystery of the Incarnation; but Luke's account is full of joy ~ angels, shepherds and people rejoicing. We ponder such different approaches, noticing that the only common elements in the two stories are the names: Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Bethlehem.

## Second Reading

*Hebrews 10 : 5-10*

The book has been glorifying the Christ (chapter four) who is the mediator of a new covenant between God and mankind and has entered the heavenly sanctuary by completing the covenant through shedding his blood in a unique sacrifice. He is priest, victim and mediator and we share his glory.

Now, in chapter five, the author looks back over the old covenant, the repeated sacrifices and offerings for sin, and dares to imagine Christ's thoughts on coming into the world.

Christ speaks to his father, acknowledging that not sacrifice but obedience is what God asks. The sin offerings were an escape from real worship (love and service of God, obedience to God's will) simply covering over repeated wrongdoing. In contrast, the Christ offers himself in a act of utter obedience, thus pleasing his father and redeeming humanity.

## Wisdom from the Saints



## Gospel Reading

*Luke 1: 39-44*

This is a puzzling story. Mary's journey would have taken about five days. Would a family or her betrothed, Joseph, have allowed her to make such a journey? A young girl on Roman-patrolled road, passing through bandit-infested country? Elizabeth did not need Mary's assistance because she was of a priestly family and would be surrounded by relations and friends rejoicing that, at last, she would have a child (Luke 1:57-58)

When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting she cries out with joy. She already knows, before Mary tells her, that Mary is with child (Luke 1:42) and we wonder how she knew. There seems to be no family contact - because Mary only knows through an angel's message that Elizabeth is with child. How would she explain to her family what she knows in order to justify making this long and arduous journey?

The passage seems to be richly symbolic. Elizabeth is one of a number of Old Testament women who waited in sorrow for a child - Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, Samson's mother - and they symbolise the waiting of Israel for the birth of the Messiah. Mary is the mother of the Messiah Saviour and her meeting with Elizabeth is the meeting of the Old and New Testaments: longing and fulfilment. The Visitation story is a spiritual story.

## People of God

**St. John of Kanti** was born in 1390 at Kanti in Poland. He was an intelligent boy and went to the University of Cracow where he obtained good degrees, was ordained priest and appointed to be a lecturer. He was a man of penance and prayer, though sometimes too severe in his penance ~ as friends tried to advise him.

He was a good teacher and preacher ~ but that drew the envy of some of his colleagues and they conspired to have him dismissed from the university. He was appointed to be a parish priest but, at first, he failed because he lacked confidence and the people found him too timid in accepting parish responsibilities. Slowly, he won the people's hearts as they saw in him genuine goodness: prayer, penance, kindness. He stayed for some years and the people were sad to lose him when he was reappointed to the university to teach Scripture.

However, he did not loose contact with the common people and through his parish experience he had learned to be available for everyone ~ the poorest in the city and the most intelligent at the university. His humility, his failures, his bearing envy and dislike patiently, made him a man wonderfully approachable and very generous. When he was dying the whole city shared the sorrow. He died on Christmas Eve in 1473.