

**PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL AND ST SIMON STOCK**  
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**4th Sunday of Advent - 20th December 2020**

**REFLECTION**

The great mystery we are preparing to celebrate this week, and everyday throughout the octave of Christmas, is the disarming fact that *God took up our human nature in order to rebuild us*. God comes to build (or rebuild) us (his house) for Himself. St Paul tells that God has had this plan from eternity and it is now only being revealed. Mary in her openness becomes the instrument for fulfilling that plan and thus stands as a symbol of the kind of people we are meant to be for God.

My dear friends, Christmas reminds us that it does not take a great deal to be a great person, that is a person living according to God's will and thus a person who is changing the world. No doubt your understanding of a 'great person' might be different. Some of us might think it is being a celebrity or being influential in politics or in the business world. But it is a lot simpler than that as we see in the case of Mary. The emphasis we hear in our first reading is that it is God who is doing the work of building each of us to become a great person. It is not what we achieve by ourselves as we might often be led to believe.

The other important point, which St Paul reminds us of, is that God has from eternity had the plan of building us into greatness and He continues to build us until that dream is achieved. The first Christmas was the ultimate revelation of God's plan; His dream for us. And that is what we are about to celebrate. God, by becoming a human being like us, elevates our human nature to the status of 'sharers in God's nature.' It is like the King of the universe coming to dine in your house. What a great respect you would enjoy afterwards and everything would change for you.

St Luke narrates for us in the Gospel how God sought collaboration in His plan of becoming a human being in order to save us. God sent the angel Gabriel to bring His proposal for collaboration to Mary, a young Jewish girl. This proposal, if accepted, would make Mary extremely great and would become the talk of the world because she would become the channel through which every human being would share in the life of God. However, it would also alter her own dreams for her life, perhaps getting married and having several children, like almost any Jewish woman. Mary was not obliged to accede to God's proposal; she had the freedom to choose either way. St Luke tells us emphatically that Mary was a virgin. This is not merely about Mary's physical virginity. More than that, St Luke is emphasizing the openness of Mary. Virginity is an image of openness, the availability to be in union. St Luke further tells us that Mary would continue to be a virgin even after becoming the Mother of the Son of God, so that her openness for union should never cease.

Mary stands as a symbol of what each of us should be in the plan of God. God is making a proposal to each of us to become His collaborator in becoming a human being through whom only He must save the world. Like Mary, we have a choice to make. To be available to God to achieve this plan each of us, like Mary, must be and remain a virgin: that is a person that is open for union (collaboration) with God. For Jesus to be born in our world this Christmas,

God is making a proposal to each of us to be His collaborators and is expecting our response. What will be your response?

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## NOTICES

### **The Church is Open**

Please note that although London has moved into Tier 3 COVID restrictions, thankfully they do not affect our church opening for private prayer nor our Eucharistic celebrations.

### **Mass Times for Christmas 2020**

24<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Vigil): 4.30pm, 6.00pm, 8.00pm, 10.00pm and 12.00 midnight

25<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Day): 8.30am, 10.00am, 12.15pm and 6.00pm

*All Masses are open for anyone to attend. No prior booking is required.*

### **Christmas Confessions**

23<sup>rd</sup> December: 9.00am – 12.00 noon & 3.00pm – 5.00pm

24<sup>th</sup> December 9.00am – 12.00 noon & 3.00pm – 4.30pm

Mass Times from 26<sup>th</sup> December to 3<sup>rd</sup> January inclusive remain as usual: 8.00am, 12.15pm and 6.00pm on weekdays; 8.30am, 10.00am, 12.15pm and 6.00pm on Sundays.

*Please Note: There will be no exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 25<sup>th</sup> December to 3<sup>rd</sup> January Inclusive. All adoration will be before the crib of our Saviour. During this time the church will be open for prayer at the crib from 9am-12noon and 4.00pm-6.00pm.*

<b><u>Collections Last Sunday</u></b>	Offering	£1246
	Gift Aid	£272

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Thaddeus, OCD