

Scripture Readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ Year C

1st Reading ~ Micah 5:2-5a

- ❖ We have reached beyond the half-way point of Advent. The readings begin to shift our attention to the first coming of the Saviour, while still holding in tension the Christ who will come again at the end of time. In this passage from the *Book of the Prophet Micah*, we hear an ancient prophecy that announces the coming of a king of Israel: a person who will save a people that have languished in distress. This Messiah will come through divine intervention from one of the small clans of the people of Judea associated with the village called Bethlehem. His coming promises security and the impact of his presence will be felt throughout the world. His very being is described as peace. (verse 5a)

2nd Reading ~ Hebrews 10:5-10

- ❖ This passage from the *Letter to the Hebrews* is a profound statement on the mystery of Christ's Incarnation. The story of humanity's attempts to live in union with God is rife with struggle, disobedience, and the marked separation between humankind and God...until the coming of Jesus Christ. Here, once and for all, that separation between God and humankind was ended, for the Son of God, fully divine, was obedient to the Father and became fully human: born of the Virgin Mary. In this way, the divine was wedded to humanity. But, it doesn't stop there: in continued obedience to the Father, Jesus lives his life to proclaim the love of God, even to death on the cross. In the Father's faithfulness, the Son is not abandoned to death, but given the new life of the Resurrection: joining earth with heaven through his body. Christ's Incarnation and Ascension are the miraculous exchange in which, through his body, the old order of sacrifice and burnt offering is ended and we are giving salvation for all time.

Gospel ~ Luke 1:39-45

- ❖ Following the accounts of the annunciations in the *Gospel According to Luke* (Luke 1:5-25 and 1:26-38), we hear about the encounter between two pregnant women: Mary, who carries the Saviour of the World, and her cousin, Elizabeth, who carries John the Baptist. It is a passage that is characterised with much energy, joy, fervour and zeal at their meeting. Elizabeth "perceived that she was in the presence of a great mystery, that Mary bore salvation in her, and that her own joyous greeting was announcing the divine presence."¹ The

¹ Days of the Lord: The Liturgical Year. Volume 1: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 159.

words of this greeting continue to be a salutation accorded to Mary by the faithful (the “Hail Mary”) because she chose to believe the message of the angel, and obediently accepted the will of God: that she would become the mother of the Lord.