

# Sunday Message

**THE WORD**

Year C • Season Colour: Violet • Psalter Week 4



Fresco at the Sanctuary of the Visitation in En Kerem, Israel, depicting Mary's meeting with Elizabeth

The first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke are a highly artistically constructed series of five scenes (this excludes the later one of the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple) and the central event is the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, both pregnant, with Jesus and John the Baptist respectively.

The reason for Mary's visit to her cousin is not, as often supposed, out of concern for her welfare or an act of kindness or charity, but rather is part of the stereotyped account of the annunciation of the birth of a significant person in the divine plan. The final and sixth element in the narrative is the giving of a sign. In this context, the sign is the confirmation of the divine or angelic word: it is an assurance that the person receiving the message has not dreamed or imagined it. Thus, Elizabeth's being pregnant is the sign to Mary that Gabriel's communication was genuine. Mary's visit is to confirm that she has understood correctly her experience with God's messenger. This is the only scene in which the two mothers meet: the unborn John the Baptist gives testimony to the arrival of the child Jesus, just as later he will proclaim the coming of the Messiah. Elizabeth hails the arrival of "the mother of my Lord" and her words have passed into the Christian tradition as part of the most common and popular prayer to Mary. ■

## REFLECT

The scene of the Visitation is the central occasion of Luke's infancy Narrative, the first two chapters of his Gospel. It brings together the two mothers, Elizabeth and Mary and their unborn children, John and Jesus. After this, they diverge and we are given the accounts of the birth of the two children. Always, Luke presents Jesus as superior to the Baptist. Elizabeth is cast in the mould of the mothers of important figures in Jewish tradition who are unable, for some unspecified reason, to conceive naturally, but by divine intervention are able eventually to give birth. Mary's virginal conception is of a different order: this to insist that Jesus is the Son of God and has no human father.

It is important to remember that the Gospels are theological documents: they are expressions of faith. While we might be inclined to see events such as the Visitation in terms of human sympathy, there is much more at work, much more depth to figures such as Elizabeth and Mary than a surface reading of the text might suggest.

It is worth reflecting on Elizabeth's final words to Mary: "Blessed is she who believed that what was said to her by the Lord would be fulfilled." In the Bible, the verb 'to believe' can be understood as 'to trust'. Perhaps if we thought more about trusting God rather than simply believing in God, we might be closer to the attitude of Mary and Elizabeth and to that of Joseph and Zechariah. Luke is always emphasising the need to listen to the Word. ■

## DO

Set out the figure of the shepherd from your crib set: reflect during the week on how seemingly ordinary people received news of the birth of the Messiah rather than official and educated individuals.



## LEARN

The point of Mary's visit to Elizabeth is to confirm Gabriel's message at the Annunciation.

In biblical Annunciation Narratives, a sign is always given to assure the recipient that they have not imagined or dreamed their experience.

People who demand signs as proof are condemned: this is not the same as individuals, such as Mary, checking out signs which they have been given by the divine messenger.

## SAY

**Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.**

(see Luke 1:28.42)

# Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021

### Weekend masses

Sat 6:00pm Dechomet 7:30pm Leitrim  
Sun 9:00am Gargory 11:00am Dromara

### Weekday masses

Mon 9:00am Leitrim 7:30pm Dechomet  
Tues 9:00pm Dromara  
Wed 7:30pm Leitrim

### Christmas Confession

Mon 20<sup>th</sup> Dec Dechomet 6:45 – 7:15pm  
Tues 21<sup>st</sup> Dec Finnis 7:00 – 7:30pm  
Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec Leitrim 6:45 – 7:15pm  
Fri 24<sup>th</sup> Dec Gargory 10:00 – 10:30am

Confession will be in the Front Seat. Please wear a face covering and respect social distance.

### Christmas Masses

**Christmas Eve:** 7pm Leitrim; 8pm Dechomet  
9pm Dromara; 10pm Gargory

**Christmas Day:** 9am Gargory; 10am Leitrim  
11am Dromara.

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Dec:** 9am Gargory; 10am Leitrim  
11am Dromara; 12noon Dechomet

Space is limited. There will not be a pre booking system. If people also want to have an anniversary Mass it is their choice, but please be aware that entry is not guaranteed.

There will be no mass on 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> Dec.  
I will be available if needed over these days

Fri 31<sup>st</sup> 10am Leitrim

New Year's Day 10am Gargory; 11am Dromara,  
and usual weekend masses

### Collections 12<sup>th</sup> Dec Parish

Dromara	£210
Drumgooland	£641

### Mary's Meals Festive Walk 28<sup>th</sup> Dec

Starting at Leitrim pitch at 10am.

For more details on the walk contact Rita Greeran on 07597416505 or see [www.marysmeals.org.uk](http://www.marysmeals.org.uk)

We welcome into Dromara Parish Darragh Flanagan

**Recently deceased** Davy McKay, Dree Hill  
Ann McAlerney, Moor Rd

### Anniversary Masses

#### Dechomet

Sat 18<sup>th</sup> William James Doyle  
Mon 20<sup>th</sup> Willie Doyle (The Rock)  
Fri 24<sup>th</sup> John Greeran  
Sun 26<sup>th</sup> Daniel, Mary Rose and Martin Matheson  
Jack Murphy

#### Leitrim

Sat 18<sup>th</sup> Patrick Smyth  
Joe McCrickard  
Peter Bannon  
Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> Kathleen and Annie Cunningham  
Brendan Cunningham  
Fr 1 24<sup>th</sup> Mary Burns

#### Dromara

Tue 21<sup>st</sup> Gerard and Mary McGrillen  
Fri 24<sup>th</sup> Mary and Bernard Rice (MM)  
Sun 26<sup>th</sup> Christopher O'Hare  
Peter and Eileen, Bernard and Catherine  
O'Hare and Deceased Family Members

### St Vincent de Paul

Any donations towards the Christmas Appeal or heating/food hampers can be done in a few ways:

#### Drumgooland

Bank Acc: Sort Code 93-83-51 Acc No 07440031

#### Dromara

Contact: Mary McCann on 077 38838191

or put a cash donation in an envelope marked **SVP** and put it in the collection basket in the church.

### NI Blood Transfusion Service

Blood donation sessions in St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan

#### Wed 29<sup>th</sup> Dec

12:30pm – 4:00pm  
5:00pm – 7:30pm

Now by appointment only.

Please call 08085 534 653 to book.