

We Respond

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ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Hail, Holy Mother, who gave birth to the King, who rules heaven and earth for ever.

Or

Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us; and he will be called Wondrous God, Prince of peace, Father of future ages: and his reign will be without end.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 66)

ANTIPHON: May God bless us in his mercy.

RESPONSE: **May God bless us in his mercy.**

LECTOR: God, be gracious and bless us and let your face shed its light upon us. So will your ways be known upon earth and all nations learn your saving help. **R.**

LECTOR: Let the nations be glad and exult for you rule the world with justice. With fairness you rule the peoples, you guide the nations on earth. **R.**

LECTOR: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. May God still give us his blessing till the ends of the earth revere him. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; now he speaks to us through his Son. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

TODAY'S READINGS Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

NEXT WEEK (Epiphany Year A) Is 60:1-6; Ps 71; Eph 3:2-3, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

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The greatest mother of them all



Most of us can handle changes to our plans that are part of everyday life. For example, a friend 'drops in' unexpectedly and we have to put aside what we're doing or set an extra place for dinner; a family member falls sick and we have to postpone a planned trip; or our computer or smart phone crashes, leaving us 'high and dry', in the midst of something important. We might complain and grumble, but we generally accept the changes, despite the inconvenience and disruption.

The change of plans announced by the angel Gabriel to Mary weren't simply an inconvenience. Her life and future were already somewhat established: she was betrothed and no doubt expecting a typical married life. Gabriel's message changed everything! In saying "yes" to God, Mary had to surrender her plans, her life and her body. By surrendering (saying "yes") to God, new life comes not only to Mary, but through her to the whole world.

It's difficult to really appreciate the disruption to Mary's life plans that her "yes" to God caused. She was a simple young girl who, without understanding fully what was being asked of her, surrendered herself to God and was "overshadowed by the power of the Most High."

Surrendering to the Spirit is a challenge for us all. It is to let God take the lead and allow the power of the Most High to

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overshadow us and lead us to where God is calling and reveal to us what God is asking. Surrendering to the Spirit means casting aside all the 'baggage' we carry and cling to, and that weighs us down and holds us back from being the person God wants us to be and knows we can be. Without openness and surrender we can become sluggish. Surrendering to the Spirit stretches us, gives us new colour and outlook, and breathes new air into our lives. Surrendering to the Spirit happens when we realise that it's time to become someone new. It's not about giving up, but moving on to something greater in God's plan.

We don't need all the details of God's plan for us. Like Mary, we need to say "yes" and trustingly to reach out and take God's hand. Only by surrendering, can we come to new life and help bring that life to the world around us.

As we leave behind 2022, we look back and, like Mary, "treasure and ponder in our hearts" all the moments of grace, blessing and growth, and give thanks. As we begin 2023, we look forward with expectation and a readiness to surrender to all that will come our way, ready to say "yes".

To our family, friends and loved ones we say: "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace."

David J Hore CSsR

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