

Blessed be that
 First Mary
 [Christmas Night 13]
 2:30

(V.O. after v.1): An old English carol about Mary the mother of Jesus, for the Advent-time, and our prayers today as we look forward in hope and joy, for the coming of Christ and for the celebration of Christmas.

MUSIC (cont.)

It's very understandable that Mary should be one of the prominent figures in the celebration of Advent time, preparing for Christmas. And tomorrow, the 8th, is one of her major festivals, the Feast of her Immaculate Conception. Unfortunately (due partly to the awkward and unfamiliar title, in English, and to a certain ambiguity, even in the English words), it's a festival and title that's often misunderstood, or even deliberately made fun of. It doesn't refer directly to Christmas, to Mary's conceiving, but to her own conception. It makes the point of Mary herself being, from her first moment of life, without any taint of sin, any mark of what we call Original Sin that infects the fallen world. She, who was to bring Christ into the human world, was the most holy and sinless of human beings. So it's not only as a matter of chronology that we honour her in Advent, but as a person who shows us how we ought prepare to welcome and receive Christ when He comes. For He comes to take away the sins of the world, to save us from sin and from ourselves, to make us whole and holy. And goodness knows, that's a need and a message that's as topical and fresh this year as it was when John the Baptist called for a change of heart, repentance, to prepare the way of the Lord. Of all the things that Christmas is, and that'll be written & talked about in these coming few weeks, this one we try to

avoid or forget — that it's about changing hearts, turning human calculations & values upside down, a revolution against sin and death to save humankind, make us free to choose to become whole again, and holy. Let us pray with others and for others and ourselves this Advent-time, as we'll celebrate Christmastime with & for others later this month: pray with the help of Mary, of John the Baptist, of Isaiah, the great prophet, of St Lucy, the legendary St Nicholas — of all the figures of Advent-time and those associated with Christ's coming among us: may His coming this year change our hearts & lives with the gift of His close presence with each of us. And now for another song & prayer of praise, another ancient carol: this one based on St Luke's gospel of the message to Mary: "Angels ad Virginem"

Xmas at Kings
 2³

MUSIC

PRAYERS

And to end

Nativity
 2⁸

today, another old song, "The Truth from Above"