

1384
1989

Midday Prayers - 931
19.12.83
16.12.91

931

Gabriel's message "The angel Gabriel from heaven came, his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame. 'All hail' said he 'thou lady, maiden Mary. Most highly favour'd lady'. Gloria! For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be. All generations land and know thee, Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold. Most highly favour'd lady'. Gloria!

— from "Gabriel's Message", a carol to an old Besseque carol-tune. ^{just} With ^{best} ^{over} ^{CD} ^{20xmas} ^{#5} ^{Back Choir parts} ¹²

that a week now to the day of our celebrating Christ's birth, the excitement of its anticipation grows, in the prayer of the church + christian people just as much as in the secular preparations for the Christmas holiday-time. But together with the increased tension of looking forward, there's also a deeper and quieter prayer that's used a lot in this final week before Christmas, expressed this way in the Preface-prayer of the Mass-liturgy in these days: **QC. PREFACE II ADVENT**

"... our hearts filled with wonder and praise" — may that be how you greet the dawn of Christmas this year, with the wonder as of a child seeing for the first time the reveal of a baby born in a lowly cattle sled (as the song puts it) for us: the wonder that, somehow, you have to be child-like really, to experience and be moved by. To go into the grotto of the rebirth of the saviour in Bethlehem, you have to stoop down low — the door is suitably high for a child to enter, and adults must humble themselves to go in.

We don't like like humbling ourselves: and even in the rituals of the church we've only ^{relatively} recently got rid of certain gestures of humbleness, on the grounds of their being contrary to local custom. But surely, humbling oneself before God is contrary not so much to local customs of any one place but to the pride of human nature. And how are we going to wonder, to begin to understand how God has humbled himself

Once - Royal
12
CD
Know w/ Cantor
Signer
#5
1:44

to come among us as one of ourselves, if we shrink from or refuse to humble ourselves, to stoop down in order to see? And if we don't wonder, how can we truly praise?

Think on this, and let's try to pray in praise to God now, while we listen to this carol

song, "The Fruit from Above" MUSIC
a carol from the Huron nation of what's now Canada PRAYER
"Twas in the room of quietude"

In the church's prayer, the build-up to Christmas has for centuries been the use of special antiphon-verses for the singing of the Magnificat at evening prayer, beginning (in present usage) on the 17th December and continuing till Christmas Eve. These are the so-called "O" Antiphons, for each of them begins with an invocation like that: O Wisdom, O Lord, O Key of David. There have been various versions of these, and also varying numbers of them over the centuries, but now they're quite standardised. And they've given the inspiration and part of the text to what is now quite well-known as an Advent carol, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" — even the music of this is, I believe, derived from a chant for the plainsong Latin version of the "O" antiphons. The words and the prayer are so deeply rooted in the Bible itself that they ought to be models of how we should pray, in wonder and praise to God, at Christmastime. And if the references and meanings aren't familiar, maybe that too could be a good starting-point in prayer. But first, let's listen, in this recording of "O Come O Come Emmanuel"

Once - Royal
23
3:26

by the choir of King's College, Cambridge, England. MUSIC
PRAYER (Devil p. 3)
Blessing
(1st song repeat)