

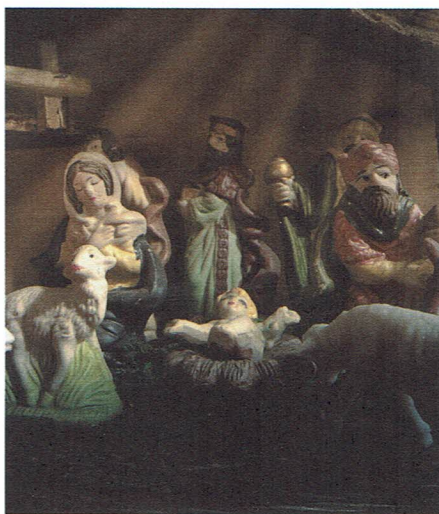
# SUNDAY PLUS

Promise

## Believe in the promise of Christmas

by Paul Higginson

The announcement of a royal birth is generally greeted with great pomp and fanfare. Yet God's ways are not our ways. He chooses an ordinary teenage girl in a quiet backwater, the angel telling her that she will conceive and give birth to a son "whose kingdom will never end". It's the most explosive birth announcement ever – in an obscure village in Galilee. This sets the pattern for Jesus' life to come, encountering ordinary people in everyday situations and turning



their lives upside down through the power of the Spirit. Don't go looking for Jesus in the palace or the penthouse suite. He chooses ordinary people in the mundane and everyday events of life: people like you and me.

Mary's response to the angel is one of faith – "I am the Lord's servant". We too can choose to say "your will be done" as we respond to life's events and experiences. Just as Mary's "yes" to God changed the course of human history, so our "yes" to God can change our hearts for ever.

Christmas is a chance to peer into the lowly stable and let the

Christ-child touch our everyday lives, transforming them into something extraordinary and beautiful. The angel says, "Nothing is impossible to God". What a promise that is! God is telling us that life is full of possibilities and hope, rather than obstacles and limitations. Leave your fears and worries at the stable door, draw close to the child in the manger, and believe in the promise of Christmas!

*Paul Higginson is the Assistant Principal at the Catholic Sixth Form College in Harrow and has been a parish catechist for thirty years.*

A new dawn

by Eileen Cole

The beautiful, exuberant song of Zechariah thanks God for his great mercies towards humanity with the birth of his son John. He also looks to the future with joy and hope in the saving action of God towards Israel. Zechariah's son will prepare for the coming of God incarnate.

Christmas Eve has arrived, we sing with the Church, "Come, morning star, radiance of eternal light, sun of justice, come and enlighten those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death". A new day is dawning. Perhaps our prayer could be "Jesus, I also want to be born anew. I know that isn't easy and I get tired, but I also know that by being

born into our world, you have given me the best proof of your faithful love. If you have done this for me, what will I not do for you?"

*Eileen Cole is a Media Officer with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.*

**Lord, watch over my family, friends and all those whom I know and love. Fill us with your joy as we celebrate Jesus' birth. Where people are lonely or sad, touch their hearts with your love and comfort. Amen.**

Angels

by Fr Eddie McGhee

Angels are never the problem: it's their wings. Popular art has done angels no favours. The Greek word that we translate as "angel" is, in secular writings, translated as messenger. God's messengers were specially chosen. Then, as now, to be God's messenger was to be someone special. Art depicted angels, God's messengers, with wings because they came from heaven – up there – to earth. We may understand science a bit better but what about God's message? We are all chosen in baptism to be God's messengers. We were baptised with water, anointed, given a white garment and a baptismal candle. Wings were

not presented, even as an optional extra. God's messengers were and are chosen to proclaim God's message. It is the message that is important. God's messengers in the twenty-first century look like me and like you. Check in the mirror. You might see an angel but no wings.

*Fr Eddie McGhee is the Catholic chaplain at a Scottish prison and the author of Faith Inside: a guide for Catholics in prison, available from Redemptorist Publications: [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk)*

**“When we realise that God is in love with our smallness, that he made himself small in order to better encounter us, we cannot help but open our hearts to him.**

**Pope Francis**

Merry Christmas from all of us at Redemptorist Publications

<b>Today:</b> 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16 Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38	<b>Monday:</b> Vigil Mass: Isaiah 62:1-5 Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 Matthew 1:1-25	<b>Mass During the Night:</b> Isaiah 9:1-7 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14	<b>Dawn Mass:</b> Isaiah 62:11-12 Titus 3:4-7 Luke 2:15-20	<b>Mass During the Day:</b> Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-6 John 1:1-18	<b>Tuesday:</b> Acts 6:8-10; 7:54 – 8:1 Matthew 10:17-22	<b>Wednesday:</b> 1 John 1:1-4 John 20:2-8	<b>Thursday:</b> 1 John 1:5 – 2:2 Matthew 2:13-18	<b>Friday:</b> 1 John 2:3-11 Luke 2:22-35	<b>Friday (E):</b> Colossians 1:24-29 Luke 22:24-30	<b>Saturday:</b> 1 John 2:12-17 Luke 2:36-40	<b>Next Sunday:</b> Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3 Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19 Luke 2:22-40
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