

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Bambinelli Sunday



The beautiful Advent Tradition, Bambinelli Sunday, was instituted by Saint Pope John Paul II during his Papacy. Children and adults bring their Baby Jesus figures from their homes to St Peter's Square where they are blessed by the Pope. Then, following the Sunday Angelus address, the Holy Father blesses the statues of Baby Jesus which the children will take back to homes to be placed under their Christmas trees.

All children and families are invited to bring the Baby Jesus figure from their homes to be blessed. Families can make their own 'Bambinelli' if they wish. Pope Francis has continued the tradition, blessing the statuettes which children bring before him in the Square. Parishes

around the world now join in the celebration, encouraging young children to make the connection between the Nativity set at home and the local church where they worship each weekend.

A suggestion is, following the blessing, take your 'Bambinelli' home, wrap it and open it as a family on Christmas morning where the youngest member of the family would place it in the crib. A gift of the presence of Christ in your home this Christmas.

This year we will celebrate 'Bambinelli Sunday' on December the 21st | 22nd.

On Bambinelli Sunday, Pope Francis has a message for children "Dear Children, listen carefully: When you pray before your Nativity Scene, remember to pray also for me as I shall remember you. I thank you heartily—and have a Merry Christmas.

Fourth Sunday

This Sunday we read the story of the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary about the birth of Jesus. This story is found only in Luke's Gospel. On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the liturgy shifts our attention from John the Baptist to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both John and Mary serve as important figures for our reflection during the season of Advent; they both played instrumental roles in preparing the way for Jesus. Last week we reflected on John the Baptist's announcement that the Savior was among us, although not yet recognized. This week we reflect upon Mary's example of faith and obedience to God, traits which permitted her to receive the angel's message that God's Son would be born as a human person, as one of us.

We are familiar with the story of the Annunciation, and it is fitting that we recall how God announced the birth of Jesus as we make our final preparations for our celebration of the Incarnation. The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Mary greeted the angel's news with awe and wonder and asked how it could be possible that she could give birth to a child. In his reply, the angel Gabriel announced the seemingly impossible reality: the child to be born would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would be God's own Son. The angel reported to Mary another miracle; her relative Elizabeth was also pregnant despite having been thought to be unable to have a child. Mary's response to the angel, which is called her *fiat*, is an example of complete faith and obedience to God.

The story of the Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give birth to his Son so that all humanity would know God's salvation. Mary, already full of God's grace, was able to cooperate in this great plan for our salvation. Thus Jesus was born as one of us, fully human and also fully divine. This is the mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and are able to respond with obedience.

