

change toward PreChristmas. In 1808 the churches in the Grand-Duchy of Hesse used Luke 1:39-80 on the First Sunday of Advent. We resisted the attempt, but during the first revision of the Lectionary in 1974, we made Advent Four a part of the birth narrative. Elisabeth certainly felt fortunate. When her relative Mary paid her a visit she exclaimed, "Why have you come to me!" Her question indicated her sense of unworthiness in receiving a visit from the mother of her Lord. It indicated her faith in ascribing to the One still in Mary's womb such a high title, "Lord." This caused Mary to sing of the magnificence. She didn't glory in her unworthiness; as did Elizabeth. Mary gloried in God's regard for her (and by extension all the women of the world.) Sin enter the world though Eve. Salvation entered the world through Mary.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

¶ O heavenly Father, You have made all things in Heaven and Earth to serve Your will and witness to Your glory and goodness. We give thanks for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the salvation You have given us in Him.

In the assurance that You are near to all who call on You in truth, we pray for all people everywhere. Let Your Spirit prevail in every home and school, in every shop and store, and in every kind of labor or industry. Show forth Your honor and glory to the nations of the Earth; overthrow all who would hinder the progress of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Gather all who are persecuted for His name's sake and give prosperity to all who love Your truth. Be with the homeless, the fatherless, the comfortless, and help them in their affliction to trust in You, sending them such deliverance as will turn their hearts and bring them to a confession of that name that is above every name, Jesus Christ.

For the wounded in spirit, the sick in mind, the distressed in heart, we pray that You would make Your face shine on them. For all strangers, all travelers, and all who are away from home in any service or calling, we ask You to accompany them with Your light and Love. For captives and prisoners, for the desolate and forsaken, and for all in peril of life or soul, we implore Your aid and comfort. For the sick and the aged, for those in labor and those in any anguish, for the dying and those who mourn their passing, be most gracious; look with kindness on them and give them the peace of Your Holy Child Jesus.

Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. (**Time of silent prayer.**)

We give thanks for the gift that no words can describe, the gift of Jesus Christ our Lord. We pray, O heavenly Father, that this gift may be ours in faith. Grant that our hearts may be a dwelling place for Your Son and that we may know; the joy of His presence, the blessing of following His steps, and the glory of that place in Heaven He has promised to all who believe. In His exalted name we pray.

© Amen.

ADVENT FOUR

Chant Tone



Introit

My soul magni | fies the Lord,*
and my spirit rejoices in God my
— Savior.

My mouth derides my | enemies,*
because I rejoice in Your sal — vation.
There is none holy | like the Lord;*
there is none besides You; there is
no rock — like our God.

The barren has borne — seven,*
but she who has many children is
— forlorn.

The Lord kills and | brings to life;*
He brings down to Sheol and
— raises up.

The Lord makes poor and — makes rich;*
He brings low and | He exalts.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy — Spirit;
as it was in the be — ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. — Amen.

My soul magni | fies the Lord,*
and my spirit rejoices in God my
— Savior.

(Antiphon, Luke 1:46b-47;
1 Samuel 2:1b, 2, 5b-7)

Collect of the Day

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Gradual

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of — Zion!*
Shout aloud, O daughter of Je | rusalem!

Behold, your king is com | ing to you;*
righteous and having salva | tion is He.

Blessèd is he who comes in the name | of the Lord.*
We bless you from the house | of the Lord.

(Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26 alternative)

ENTRANCE PRAYER: We will sing of Your steadfast Love, O Lord, our God, our heavenly Father. With our mouths we will proclaim Your faithfulness to all generations. As we near the celebration of the birth of Your Son Jesus Christ, we stand in awesome wonder of Your mysterious power and unapproachable wisdom. For revealing to us Your plans for our salvation, conceived in the womb of eternity, announced by Your prophets, and brought forth in the fullness of time, we praise and glorify Your most Holy name. Fill our hearts with such joy that others may recognize these gifts as coming from You through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

THIS IS THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT. This year we wrap up Advent with the Mother of God, Mary. It is impossible to say why God chose Mary to bear His Only Begotten Son. We know so little about her, nothing of her ambitions, nothing of her desires, nothing of her dreams. What we do know is that when called on by God, Mary stepped up to the call and did something few of us are able to do in much smaller circumstances. She fulfilled the call in a manner suited to one whose faith is deep. Mary's song does reveal a few things; especially her great humility, Mary seriously understood the magnificence of the birth of Jesus into the world. Listen carefully to the humility she expresses, while at the same time expressing her great joy that the Savior is to be born.

THEME OF THE DAY:

We Acknowledge the Lord

INTROIT—(Antiphon, Luke 1:46b-47) 1 Samuel 2:1b, 2, 5b, 6, 7
For Holy Saturday we previously used an Introit based solely on Jonah. In our recent liturgy we use Introits based solely on Exodus. This is the only other time that our Introit does not contain any part of a Psalm. Our introit is based on the song sung by Hannah when she fulfilled her promise to give Samuel to God. Mary used (at very least) a similar theme when she sang the Magnificat.

COLLECT

Our collect reminds us that we are in Advent. We are asking God to come, which is by way of asking for Jesus to come soon in His Second Advent.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON—Micah 5:2-5a

The Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament prophets to record promises of a Savior. Immediately we begin to think of chariots and prancing horses, of palaces and princes. When we come to Bethlehem we need an interpretation from God. We look at the nativity scene and conclude that this baby is a pauper, a peasant's son. "Wrong," says God, and it is He who tells us what to expect. It won't be pomp and circumstance. The birth of the Savior will be in Bethlehem, the least of the towns of the kingdom. The king won't be born for the majesty of man, but for the majesty of God.

GRADUAL—Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26 alternative

The Old Testament people put their faith and trust in the prophecy of Zechariah, and it was fulfilled. Our faith and trust is in the return of our king, the Lord, (His Second Advent.)

EPISTLE LESSON—Hebrews 10:5-10

Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the cross is incarnational. To make that sacrifice, Christ, (God, a Spirit,) took on a body, a body capable of carrying out God's commandments and capable of experiencing pain and death. This is the aspect of Jesus' sacrifice we especially celebrate as we near the Christmas observance. The text shortened the distance between the birth of Christ and His death on the cross. We are reminded that Christ was born as a human being in order to die. Even the word "prepared" connotes the idea that in being given a body Christ was being prepared for His appointed sacrifice.

GOSPEL LESSON—Luke 1:39-56

The ancient church used the following lessons for Advent. Advent 1: Matthew 21:1-9; Advent 2: Luke 21:25-36; Advent 3: Matthew 11:2-10; Advent 4: John 1:19-28. The churches intent was to ponder the Second Coming apart from the celebration of the Birth. About 1800 we began a