

**Lectionary readings: 2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16; Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-26; Romans 16: 25-27; Luke 1: 26-38 (Fourth in Advent)**

### For reflection and prayer

- **2 Samuel 7:** David wanted to build a shrine for the Ark of the Covenant (which symbolised God's presence) for he wanted to honour God. We have built churches, some very elaborate indeed. Do we want to contain and confine God in our church buildings so that we conveniently forget Him when we leave them? God won't be contained within a building, for He lives in our hearts. And in Advent God is reminding us once more that He is coming to us and that He wants us to welcome Him into our hearts so that He can be part of all we are and do. How can we make space for Him this week?
- **Psalm 89:** The first four verses speak of God's steadfast love, goodness and faithfulness. His covenant encompasses all who choose to walk the path of Love. God makes Himself known to us as He did to David. He invites us to Life. His faithfulness and abiding love are with us and He wants His name to be glorified in and through us. And so in gratitude we cry out, *'You are the Beloved, our very Breath.'* (Psalms for Praying)
- **Romans 16:** Paul says that God, who is Mystery, is being revealed and becoming known. Sometimes, as we look around the world, that is difficult to believe. If He is going to be revealed this Christmas, it will be in and through us, through our lives. How can we make Jesus known this Christmas?

- **Luke 1:** This is Mary's encounter with God's messenger - Mary, an ordinary person like ourselves, in whom God wanted to find a home. God, through His messenger, says to Mary - and to us - *'You're beautiful with God's beauty, beautiful inside and out.'* (The Message) I wonder how you respond to that? Do you believe that God sees Himself in you, sees you as beautiful? That's worth pondering this week. Mary was to give birth to Jesus. And God is asking each one of us to make a home for God in our hearts and give birth to Jesus in our lives. Mary's response was *'Let it be with me just as you say'* - no thought of the cost, just a willingness to be all that God wanted her to be and to open her heart and life to God to fulfil His purposes. So God waits for our response this Christmas. Are we willing to let God make His home in us so that we can make Him known in the world? What is your personal response?

### A prayer

Lord, You said to Mary, 'Don't be afraid.' And You are saying the same to me. But the truth is, Lord, I am afraid of many things, especially of You. I like to keep You at arm's length, afraid of what You will do with me, where You will lead me, how You will change me. But You love me deeply and see Yourself in me and You want to set me free, free from my fears, free to be fully myself, free to accept my limitations and to admit my deep needs, free to love, free to live, free to be fully human, free to believe that I am beautiful in Your eyes, free to open my heart and life to You, knowing that You will only act in my life in love. Lord, I open my heart to You. Make Your home in me. Do in me all You want. I trust You. Amen.