Christ Church Cathedral
OXFORD

FESTAL EVENSONG
for the Feast of the Visitation
Preparing for Worship

Today the Church celebrates the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, an event recorded in St Luke’s gospel (1: 39–56), and the setting for Mary’s great song of praise, the Magnificat.

Much of the music in this service comes from recordings made by the Cathedral Choir under the direction of Dr Stephen Darlington, of material from the Eton Choirbook of the early sixteenth century. This music is often long and complex, but rewards concentrated listening. It is music written to the glory of God; to display the skill of the composers, clerks and choristers of the late fifteenth century; and to lift the hearts and minds of those who listen, that we may experience through the glory of richly complex music something of the glory of God and the song of the angels. It is supplemented by new recordings: by the Organist, Professor Steven Grahl; lay and academical clerks of the Choir; and boys from the Cathedral School. The Officiant is the Revd Canon Sarah Foot, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History.

Entering into worship through audio broadcast is more familiar to some of us than to others. If this is new to you, try to actively share in the service, not just have it on in the background; and join in the words in bold. Find a comfortable position that helps you to pray, and to receive the love of God in your heart. As we listen, we are united in worship and prayer despite the distance between us.

You can find regular audio services, alongside other resources for worshipping at home, at www.chch.ox.ac.uk/onlineworship. Please do get in touch with the cathedral if you would like us to pray for or support you. May God bless you as we worship him together.

The Eton Choirbook material, recorded between 2009 and 2017, is available as a series of five CDs on the Avie Records label.

Music before the service

*recorded by the Organist, Professor Steven Grahl, at home*

*Ave maris stella*  
Louis Couperin (1626–1661)
Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.

Luke 1: 45

Canon Foot welcomes us and introduces the service.

The Opening Versicles and Responses
recorded by the Clerks of the Choir
to a plainsong setting

Minister  O Lord, open thou our lips
Choir     and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
Minister  O God, make speed to save us.
Choir     O Lord, make haste to help us.
Minister  Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
           and to the Holy Ghost;
Choir     as it was in the beginning, is now,
           and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Minister  Praise ye the Lord.
Choir     The Lord’s Name be praised.
Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
    shout, O Israel!  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
    O daughter Jerusalem!  
The Lord has taken away the judgements against you,  
    he has turned away your enemies.  
The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;  
    you shall fear disaster no more.  
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
Do not fear, O Zion;  
    do not let your hands grow weak.  
The Lord, your God, is in your midst,  
    a warrior who gives victory;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness,  
    he will renew you in his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing  
    as on a day of festival.

Magnificat  
Walter Lambe (1450/51–1504)

Magnificat anima mea Dominum;  
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.  
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae;  
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.  
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est;  
et sanctum nomen ejus.  
Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies;  
timentibus eum.  
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo;  
Dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede;
et exaltavit humiles.

Esurientes implevit bonis;
et divites dimisit inanes.

Suscepit Israel, puerum suum;
recordatus misericordiae suae.

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros;
Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto:
sicut erat in principio,
et nunc, et semper:
et in Saecula saeculorum. Amen

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden.

For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations.

He hath shewed strength with his arm:
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat:
and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel:
as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

(Luke 1:46–55)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.
Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.’

And Mary said,

‘My soul magnifies the Lord,
   and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
   Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
   and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
   from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
   he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
   and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
   and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
   in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
   to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

And Mary remained with her for about three months and then returned to her home.
Nunc Dimittis
recorded by the Clerks of the Choir
to a plainsong setting

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace:
according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen:
thy salvation;

Which thou hast prepared:
before the face of all people;

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles:
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

(Luke 2:29–32)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.
The Lesser Litany and Responses

Minister  The Lord be with you.
Choir    And with thy spirit.

Minister  Let us pray.
Choir    Lord, have mercy upon us.
         Christ, have mercy upon us.
         Lord, have mercy upon us.

Choir    Our Father, which art in heaven,
         hallowed be thy name;
         thy kingdom come;
         thy will be done,
         in earth as it is in heaven.
         Give us this day our daily bread.
         And forgive us our trespasses,
         as we forgive them that trespass against us.
         And lead us not into temptation;
         but deliver us from evil.  Amen.

Minister  O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.
Choir    And grant us thy salvation.

Minister  O Lord, save the Queen.
Choir    And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Minister  Endue thy ministers with righteousness.
Choir    And make thy chosen people joyful.

Minister  O Lord, save thy people.
Choir    And bless thine inheritance.

Minister  Give peace in our time, O Lord.
Choir    Because there is none other that fighteth for us,
         but only thou, O God.

Minister  O God, make clean our hearts within us.
Choir    And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.
The Collect of the Day

Almighty God, forasmuch as through thy grace Elizabeth did rejoice to receive Mary as the mother of her Lord: Grant unto all thy servants the like grace to receive thy Son and to acclaim him as our Saviour, that through him we may with Mary magnify thy holy Name; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect for Peace

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that, by thee, we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

The Collect for Aid against Perils

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.
Ave Maria, mater Dei, 
regina caeli, 
domina mundi, imperatrix inferni, 
miserere mei 
et totius populi Christiani; 
et ne permitas nos mortaliter peccare; 
sed tuam sanctissimam voluntatem adimplere. Amen.

Hail Mary, mother of God, 
queen of heaven, 
mistress of the world, empress of hell: 
have mercy on me 
and on all Christian people; 
and do not allow us to commit mortal sin 
but help us to fulfil your most holy will. Amen.

Words: anonymous Latin prayer
Music: William Cornysgh (d. c.1502)

Prayers

led by Canon Foot. Please join with her to say the Grace at the conclusion of the prayers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, 
and the love of God, 
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, 
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Hymn

recorded by Christ Church Cathedral School in March 2020
accompanied by Sophie Biddell

Sing we of the blessed Mother who received the angel’s word, 
And obedient to his summons bore in love the infant Lord; 
Sing we of the Joys of Mary at whose breast that child was fed 
Who is Son of God eternal and the everlasting Bread.
Sing we, too, of Mary’s sorrows,  
of the sword that pierced her through,  
When beneath the cross of Jesus  
she his weight of suffering knew,  
Looked upon her Son and Saviour  
reigning high on Calvary’s tree  
Saw the price of our redemption  
paid to set the sinner free.

Sing the chiefest joy of Mary  
when on earth her work was done,  
And the Lord of all creation  
brought her to his heavenly home:  
Virgin Mother, Mary blessed,  
Raised on high and crowned with grace,  
May thy Son, the world’s redeemer,  
Grant us all to see his face.

WORDS: GB Timms (1910–1997)  
MUSIC: Abbots’ Leigh, Cyril V. Taylor (1907–1992)

Blessing

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,  
fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
Amen.
Salve Regina

Salve, Regina, mater misericordiae; vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve. Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae. Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle. Eia ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exsilium ostende. O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Words: traditional Latin, attr. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)
Music: Robert Wylkynson (c. 1475–1515)


Cover image: The Oxford Madonna, statue by Peter Eugene Ball in the Lady Chapel of Christ Church Cathedral. Photograph by Philippa White. Other images from Christ Church Cathedral, photography by Ralph Wilkinson.

Music after the service
recorded by the Organist, Professor Steven Grahl, at home

Meine Seele erhebt den Herren (Fugue on the Magnificat, BWV 733)  
JS Bach (1685-1850)