

Lectionary Texts for December 24, 2023 • *Fourth Sunday in Advent* - Year B  
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 • Luke 1:46b-55 • Romans 16:25-27 • Luke 1:26-38

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**Luke 1:26-38**

*The Veiled Virgin*, ca 1850, by Giovanni Strazza, Italian, 1818-1875  
Carrara marble statue, 19" high  
Presentation Convent, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

Little information is available about Giovanni Strazza. Most famous for the above work, he also sculpted *Ishmael Abandoned in the Desert*, a replica of which is in the Gallery of Modern Art in Milan, and *The Brave Righetto*, a boy hero of the Roman Republic of 1849, which is located in the Palazzo Litta in Milan. Other sculptors have created works of the Virgin and Jesus with veils, but this is considered one of the best. A masterpiece of intricacy, the veil appears almost translucent as it lightly rests upon the Virgin's head and face. The delicate features and

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serene expression of the Virgin evoke a sense of grace and serenity, capturing the essence of her revered status.

The work arrived in Newfoundland in 1856 and was kept in the Bishop's Palace until 1862 when it was presented to the Superior of the Presentation Convent.

Strazza was born and studied in Milan and then worked in Rome between 1840 and 1858. Returning to Milan, he taught at Brera Academy, his alma mater, from 1860 until his death.

— Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan  
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## **2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16**

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent."

Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"

Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies.

Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

## **Luke 1:46b-55**

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor 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 forever.”

### **Romans 16:25-27**

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith — to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

### **Luke 1:26-38**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Then the angel departed from her.