The birth of Jesus is not like the birth of Greek or Roman God’s or heroes. ‘There is no grandeur in the circumstances: Mary is just a young woman. Nor is there grandeur in the consequences — life goes on as normal. What is astonishing (and this is obscured by too much familiarity with this Gospel passage) is how plain and simple it all sounds. Mary has “found favour” with God. Here is a clear contrast with her Son, who was the eternal Word from the beginning. ‘There’s something about Mary. She has “found” favour; God has recognised her nature. That is ultimately why Christians should learn from her — from the example of her obedience and her questioning. God has chosen her, not for what she was “in the beginning” (John 1.1), but because she has become a person whom he highly favours. That ought to direct our minds to the infinite possibilities of a life lived in tune with God’. (by Cally Hammond in Church Times 8231)
COLLECT:

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our Saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

TODAY’S MUSIC:

Hail to the Lord’s anointed
Long ago prophets knew
The Angel Gabriel
The Holly and the Ivy

FIRST READING:

A reading from the 2nd book of Samuel.

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, ‘Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent.’ Nathan said to the king, ‘Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.’ But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ‘Go and tell my servant David, “Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies from my face; they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me; if he does evil, I will punish him with the rod such as men use, with strokes such as mankind gives. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever.”’

This is the word of the Lord.

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

RESPONSORIAL PSALM:

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord; through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth. Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever, that your truth is firmly established as the heavens. R/

I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your dynasty for ever and set up your throne through all ages. R/

He will say to me: ‘You are my father, my God, the rock who saves me.’ I will keep my love for him always; for him my covenant shall endure. R/

Psalm 89

SECOND READING:

A reading from St Paul’s letter to the Romans.

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Luke 1:26-38

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, Alleluia!
I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me Alleluia!

GOSPEL:

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Luke.

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. He went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.’ She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, ‘Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?’ ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you’ the angel answered ‘and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.’ ‘I am the handmaid of the Lord,’ said Mary ‘let what you have said be done to me.’ And the angel left her.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Rom 16:25-27