

All Saints Church, Via del Babuino, 153; Rome, Italy
 Tel 06 3600 1881 office@allsaintsrome.org

WHO IS THIS MAN NAMED JOHN? This Advent, most of the gospel readings will deal with John the Baptist. Many will remember him as the one dressed in tattered clothes, eating grasshoppers and honey, and living in the desert. Who was he? John is a Christian Saint. His name, at the time of his birth would have been written as *ياحي يحي* Yahyā or *انحوي* Yūḥanna. He was a preacher and ascetic who according to tradition, attracted large crowds on the banks of the Jordan River, calling for repentance and baptism in view of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was one of those whom he baptized. Thereafter he became known to the Christian church as John the Baptizer. He was killed by Herod Antipas, whom

John had denounced for his incestuous marriage. Jesus' own ministry followed John's, and some of Jesus' early followers had been initially followers of John. John, like Jesus, preached at a time of political, social, and religious conflict.

All four Gospels record John the Baptist's ministry. They depict him as proclaiming Christ's arrival. The Gospel of Luke includes an account of John's infancy, introducing him as the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth, who had no children and they were both well advanced in years. His birth, name, and office were foretold by the angel Gabriel to Zachariah, while Zachariah was performing his functions as a priest in the temple of Jerusalem. According to Luke, Zachariah was a priest of the course of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was of the daughters of Aaron; consequently John automatically held the priesthood of Aaron.

Luke states that John was born about six months before Jesus. Zachariah had lost his speech at the behest and prophecy of the angel Gabriel and it was restored on the occasion of Zachariah naming John. On the basis of Luke's account, the church's calendar places the feast of John the Baptist on June 24, six months before Christmas. According to Luke, Jesus and John the Baptist were related, their mothers being cousins Luke 1:36.

The Koran also mentions John the Baptist. *Sura Maryam* identifies John as the son of Zachariah and maternal cousin of Jesus. It relates an account similar to that of the Gospel of Luke, including the lack of children for Zachariah and his wife. Zachariah is not described as being rendered mute because of his doubts, but only that the sign of the coming of John was that he would not speak for three nights. John, whose tidings are foretold by the angels, is exhorted to hold fast to the Scripture and was given wisdom by God while still a child. (Surah 19:7–12). He is described as "pure," "devout," "dutiful towards his parents," as "not arrogant or rebellious" (Surah 19:7–15) and is called "a Prophet of the Righteous" coming "to confirm a word from Allah." Surah 3:39.

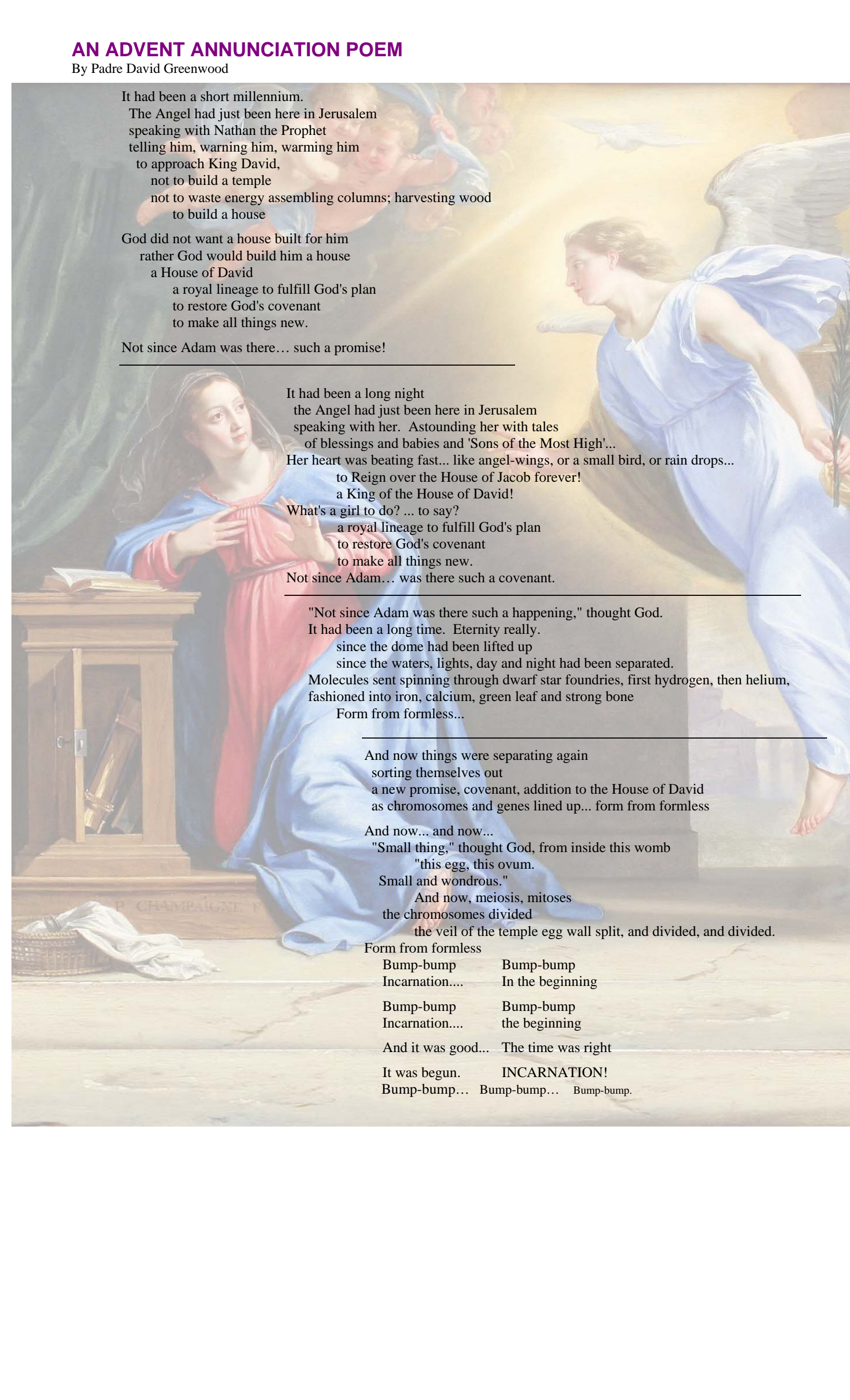
CHRISTMAS SEASON WORSHIP

- 20 DEC Sunday Advent 4
 - 6:00 pm - Festival of 9 lessons with carols
- 24 DEC Christmas Eve
 - 12:00 Noon: Eucharist
 - 5:00pm: Crib Service
 - 11.30pm: Midnight mass
- 25 DEC Christmas Day
 - 8.30: Said Eucharist
 - 10.30: Sung Eucharist



AN ADVENT ANNUNCIATION POEM

By Padre David Greenwood



It had been a short millennium.
The Angel had just been here in Jerusalem
speaking with Nathan the Prophet
telling him, warning him, warming him
to approach King David,
not to build a temple
not to waste energy assembling columns; harvesting wood
to build a house

God did not want a house built for him
rather God would build him a house
a House of David
a royal lineage to fulfill God's plan
to restore God's covenant
to make all things new.

Not since Adam was there... such a promise!

It had been a long night
the Angel had just been here in Jerusalem
speaking with her. Astounding her with tales
of blessings and babies and 'Sons of the Most High'...
Her heart was beating fast... like angel-wings, or a small bird, or rain drops...
to Reign over the House of Jacob forever!
a King of the House of David!
What's a girl to do? ... to say?
a royal lineage to fulfill God's plan
to restore God's covenant
to make all things new.
Not since Adam... was there such a covenant.

"Not since Adam there such a happening," thought God.
It had been a long time. Eternity really.
since the dome had been lifted up
since the waters, lights, day and night had been separated.
Molecules sent spinning through dwarf star foundries, first hydrogen, then helium,
fashioned into iron, calcium, green leaf and strong bone
Form from formless...

And now things were separating again
sorting themselves out
a new promise, covenant, addition to the House of David
as chromosomes and genes lined up... form from formless

And now... and now...
"Small thing," thought God, from inside this womb
"this egg, this ovum.
Small and wondrous."
And now, meiosis, mitoses
the chromosomes divided
the veil of the temple egg wall split, and divided, and divided.

Form from formless
Bump-bump Bump-bump
Incarnation.... In the beginning

Bump-bump Bump-bump
Incarnation.... the beginning

And it was good... The time was right
It was begun. INCARNATION!
Bump-bump... Bump-bump... Bump-bump.