



HIGH TIDE

December 2021

PARISH MAGAZINE
SAINT PAUL'S, WEYMOUTH



This Magazine contains: *Letter from the Vicar - Notices & News - Articles from Fr Tony, Gill Cox, Katherine Harrison, Sue Biles - O Antiphons- and more*

You can detach pages 17-32 and use it for Morning & Evening Prayer

<http://www.stpaulsweymouth.org>

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*Many thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of the Parish Magazine
and to Liz Evans for the proof-reading.*

*The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 2nd January**. Please, send all articles,
information, news you wish to be publish by Sunday 26th December.*

*The Vicar and the Churchwardens
wish you and your loved ones a merry Christmas
and a very happy New Year.*

*May the grace and love of the Lord Jesus Christ
fill your hearts and homes, and bring you peace and joy!*



*Fr Bruce and Kathy
wish all at Saint Paul's
a Happy and Holy Christmas
with our love and prayers
for the New Year.*



*May the Babe of Bethlehem bring you joy,
May the child of Nazareth bring you peace,
A holy and blessed Christmas.
Fr. Tony and Chris*

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

I must admit that I really love Advent. Such a shame it is often overshadowed by our Christmas preparation. Out of all the holy seasons of the liturgical year I find Advent to be the gentlest one. The colour of vestments and altars is the deepest violet - almost dark blue - reminding us of that Sacred Night when God was born in flesh and became one of us. Hopeful expectation is present in all our hymns and prayers and heaven, until recently inaccessible for us, now reaches out to us tenderly. All the candles of the altar and of the advent wreath symbolise the first rays of our *Oriens*: the Daybreak, the Rising One, the Morning Star - even Jesus Christ.

Cold and darkness have not yet brought on their worst and we are only at the beginning of the winter - yet the words of the Prophet Isaiah fill our hearts with light and warmth: *“You heavens, send dew from above, you skies, pour down upon us the rain we long for, him, the Just One; may he, the Saviour, spring from the closed womb of earth, and with him let right order take its being”* (45,8).

And we know that heavens have responded to our sighing. In the Book of Wisdom (18,14) we read: *“When a deep silence covered all things and night was in the middle of its course, your all-powerful Word, O Lord, leapt from heaven’s royal throne.”* The passage originally described the night of Israel’s exodus from Egypt but the Church has always applied it to the night of Jesus’ birth: to the night when our chains were broken, our darkness dispelled, our slavery ended.

The advent-blue is also the colour of Our Blessed Lady whose sweetest feast - the Immaculate Conception - falls in this season. It is with her, the God-Bearer, the Mother of the Saviour, the Mother of Fair Love that we expect the birth of Christ Jesus. We draw even nearer to her in this holy season so that she may talk to us about Jesus whom no creature knows better than she. For nearly one-thousand years have Christians turned to her: *“Show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.”*

Let us use well this Advent: let us allow our hearts to be filled with expectation and joy by reading the Scriptures; we sighed for millennia for the Saviour - now that he dwells amongst us in the Eucharist, let us come and visit him more frequently; let us learn from Mary to love Jesus more - and her too, our tender Mother.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am,
ever yours in Christ,

Fr. Gregory 4

News - Events - Notices

Service Times - as building works are progressing fast, the PCC has decided to move weekday services back to their original times in the hope that, especially during Advent, many more of you will be able to make it to these.

| | Morning Prayer | Mass | Evening Prayer |
|-----------|----------------|--------|----------------|
| Monday | — | 9am | — |
| Tuesday | — | 9am | 5pm |
| Wednesday | 9am | 10am | 5pm |
| Thursday | 9am | 6pm | 5.30pm |
| Friday | 9am | 12noon | 5pm |
| Saturday | 9am | 9.30am | 5pm |

A morning with Jesus - on the first Friday of every month (3rd of December, 9am-12noon) the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the Altar. It is a quiet, reflective time - you are welcome to arrive and to leave when you want, staying for as long or short a time as you can. It can be very comforting and strengthening to pass time with the Eucharistic Jesus - come and see it for yourself!

Anointing - will now happen (as before) on the 4th Friday of every month with the exception of the month of December when it will be the 3rd Friday because of Christmas. On these days a votive Mass is offered for the sick and after Mass all those who wish to be prayed for and/or anointed are invited to stay.

The priest lays his hands on those who wish to receive this ministry. This is an ancient form of prayer and intercession and anyone can receive it for themselves or for another person in need of prayer, in need of (spiritual or physical) healing.

After the laying on of hands all those who suffer in body, in mind, or in spirit, or are extremely frail due to age, can ask to be anointed with the Holy Oil of Sick. This Sacrament should be received by those only who truly need it because of (underlying) physical or spiritual conditions.

Christmas Novena - During the 9 days preceding Christmas we will pray a so-called “Novena” instead of Evening Prayer. This short, simple,

candle-lit service is around the Crib and consists of reading from the Bible and some Christmas Carols. It is a great opportunity to invite unchurched family members, friends, or neighbours.

Christmas Services - Please, note the changes and extra services around Christmas!

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----------|
| Sunday 19 December | Christmas Carol Service | 5pm |
| Friday 24 December (Vigil of Christmas) | Low Mass (Vigil) | 12noon |
| | Crib Service | 4pm |
| | Midnight Mass | 11.30pm |
| Saturday 25 December | (Low) Mass of the Shepherds | 8am |
| | Solemn Sung Mass | 10am |
| Monday 27 December (St. John Apostle & Evangelist) | Low Mass | 10am |
| Tuesday 28 December (Holy Innocents) | Low Mass | 10am |
| Friday 31 December | Eucharistic Adoration | 9pm-11pm |

Church obligations - Apart from Sundays when church attendance is prescribed by Divine Law (cf. Ten Commandments), the Church of England imposes an all Anglicans the obligation of church on the following days: *Epiphany* (6 January); *Candlemas* (2 February); *Annunciation* (25 March); *Ascension Day* (26 May in 2022); *All Saints* (1 November); *Christmas* (25 December). On these days (with the exception of Christmas) there will be two Masses at St. Paul's: a Low Mass at 10am and Sung Mass at 6pm to make it possible for all to attend a service.

Songs of Praise - After the great success of our first *Songs of Praise* service, there will be others in 2022. The first will be on Saturday 19 March - the theme of songs and hymns will be marked by Lent. Save the date and invite family and friends, neighbours and work-colleagues!

Munch Club - This lunch-club is open to all over 50. It meets fortnightly and offers a main and pudding for £5. Raffle tickets are always available to buy on the day. A wonderful occasion to socialise with others. For more info talk to Pam Winspear or contact the Parish Office. Why not come a little bit earlier and start with the 12noon Mass in the Lady Chapel?!

Lent - During Lent, on Fridays when there is no Munch Club, we want to restart a small group of prayer and fellowship. You are invited to stay after the 12noon Mass for a simple lunch (soup) and friendly conversation around the table. If you are interested to help with this project, or simply to come and be present, an expression of early interest is appreciated. Talk to the Vicar or to the Churchwardens.

Bible Group - Our small group of discovering our faith together will continue in the new (liturgical) year as well. We meet fortnightly at 4.30pm in church to discuss topics like sacrifice, conscience, Holy Spirit, Jesus, faith, Sacraments, euthanasia, worship, etc. The group is open to all and anyone can ask for a particular topic or question to be discussed. If you would like to come but the time does not suit you, please, talk to the Vicar.

Prayer Group - Bishops of the more Catholic wing of the Church of England have invited several Parish Priests to meet on a regular basis and to discuss how we can make our own parishes grow in faith and mission. One idea that was outlined at these meetings was an informal Prayer Group, one for each parish, where clergy and members of the congregation meet to pray for themselves, for each other, and for the parish.

The idea is that we - God, clergy, lay people - are all together in this ... so let's! Once a month, let us simply sit around the Sacrament, with a few candles, for the great part of the time in silence.

St. Paul's will take part in this initiative. This is something new, something informal, something that requires a lot of courage from each one of us. It is a time of honesty, openness, and courage - and hopefully will also become a time of healing, growth, and grace.

The Group is open to everyone. All who come can contribute in any way but no one has to. "Just" being there, in silence, is already great!!

The first meeting will be on Tuesday 28 December at 6pm where we can decide together the next date.

SafeSleep - St. Paul's will once again be involved in this winter's SafeSleep scheme which will start after Christmas. We are not sure yet whether the homeless people will be sleeping in churches and halls or at the Riviera Hotel as they did last year. Whichever it is, we will need volunteers to help cook evening meals for about seventeen people each day for seven days. Last year Susan and her team very generously cooked every night, but it would be much better if we can find seven people who can each provide at least one night's meal during the week. So, we are looking for seven very kind and lovely volunteers! For more details please speak to Tony or Gill Cox.

Christmas gift for a child - 90 out of the ca. 200 students at our school, Beechcroft, are on pupil premium. Or in other words: they are deprived. After talks with the school - how to help these children in a way that preserve their dignity and protects their identity - we have decided to try to give each one of them a voucher for Howleys Toymaster. This way they can have an (extra) gift, toy under their Christmas Tree. Please, if you can, donate for this important cause!



You can make a donation via BACS, cheques payable to “ST PAULS PCC”, or give your donation directly to Katherine or to the Churchwardens.

Beechcroft - Still on the topic of Beechcroft, the school has had a really good report from SIAMS. Read more about it in Sue Bile’s article.

Calling all Crafters - This year the Christmas Bazaar will again be having an arts and craft stall. So please will you help us by making items for our craft stall. It matters not what your crafting speciality is, the more diverse the items on display the more successful the stall will be. Therefore we are asking that you start crafting now so we can have an amazing stall at the Christmas Bazaar on 11th December 2021. Get creative - and thank you for all your help.

Weymouth Choral Society: Christmas Concert 2021 - On Saturday 18 December, Weymouth Choral Society will hold its Christmas Concert, this year at St. Paul’s. They will be joined by Weymouth Concert Brass, James Lloyd Thomas (organ), Lizzie Peacock (piano and harp), and Ellen Porter (soloist). The programme promises an evening of great variety and different musical styles. The concert starts at 7.30pm. Tickets are £12.00 (and free to under 16s). See their website www.weymouthchoralsociety.org.uk or telephone 07712 135150 to reserve.

Wednesdays - After the 10am Mass there will be tea, coffee, and biscuits and we invite you to stay for informal chat and socialising. Bring more people with you!

The voices of Morbath (final part)

Gill Cox writes:

As King Edward and his advisors tightened their grip on the religious life of the country the saying of the rosary was banned, processions forbidden, along with banners and images. Even stained glass was not safe and the lights which had been permitted before the Crucifix and Sepulchre were now also to be extinguished.

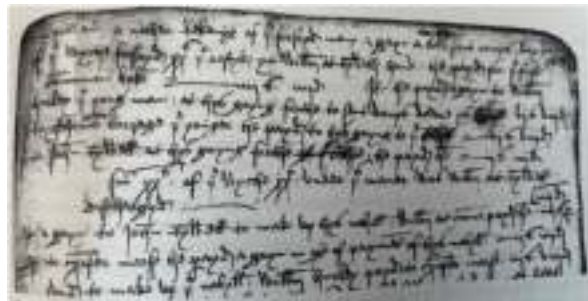
The church sheep which had been a source of income had to be sold, church ales (the main fundraising events) were now banned, so the community spirit of the parish was badly affected.

There would be no imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, no procession with palms on Palm Sunday, no solemn veneration of the Cross during Holy Week.

By now the church was in a precarious financial position and the churchwarden had to sell altar frontals and other items to make ends meet.

The pressure of the changes must have been bewildering and painful. The parishioners as well as the priest must have lived in fear, always looking over their shoulders and waiting for the next blow.

Parishioners spirited away statues and vestments (including the precious black vestments), moving them from farm to farm to escape detection. The accounts, so faithfully and neatly written down by Sir Christopher, became untidy and cramped with crossing outs and alterations. His state of mind must have been very disturbed. Panic had set in across the country and resentment grew and grew,



fuelled now by the imposition of the Book of Common Prayer.

Within two years of Edward coming to the throne there was widespread unrest all over the country and now even a small parish like Morebath was caught up in the Prayer Book rebellion. A peasant army surrounded Exeter and laid siege to the city. In July, according to the records, the parish paid for five young men of the parish “*at their goyng forthe to sent davyys down ys campe*”. St David’s Down outside Exeter was the headquarters of the rebels during the siege.

Unfortunately this West Country rebellion ended badly for the Catholic rebels and both laity and clergy were severely dealt with. It is estimated that around 4,000 men died. Only two of the young men mentioned in the records at this time ever appeared again as tax payers in the accounts so we can probably deduce that the other three perished in their rebellion against the Protestant changes.



What would we have done?

As Edward's reign drew to a close even more restrictions were imposed on the faithful of Morebath. The parish had little left of money or goods as the crown took more and more. For the first time in the accounts, Sir Christopher acknowledged the king as "*the defender of fayth*" although he had been known as that for some time.

However only two months after this entry the king died at the tender age of fifteen.

He was succeeded with great rejoicing in Morebath by his sister Mary, a faithful and devout Catholic. Mass was soon celebrated again and Latin liturgy returned.

The community rallied round to pay off the church's debts and the high altar was restored to replace the communion table which they had been forced to accept. The Easter sepulchre returned from its hiding place and the parishioners collected donations to buy gifts for the church to restore it to its former glory. The statues, including that of St. Sidwell and other precious items were unearthed and brought back into the church. Parish groups, such as the married women and the young men started fundraising again. It is evident from the accounts that the parishioners were invigorated and enthusiastic and there was a revival of the former community spirit.

But not everything in life at this time in Morebath was rosy. There was yet another break-in when much of value was stolen and in a rather scandalous event, Sir Christopher had a physical fight with another man who owed him seven pence. A sword was drawn and Sir Christopher's hands were cut. Such was parish life in the sixteenth century! Thankfully not in Westham in the 21st century!

The euphoria felt in particular by Sir Christopher at the restoration of the Catholic faith was short lived because after five years once again there was a new, and this time Protestant, queen on the throne. Mary had died in November 1558 and Elizabeth proclaimed queen. Once again there were to be changes and once again the people of Morebath had to prepare themselves and the church for protestant worship. The chalice was sold and replaced by a smaller ‘communion cup’, the high altar once again was replaced by a communion table and the rood screen dismantled. But Elizabethan Protestantism was not as severe as that of Edward and many of the less contentious traditions such as women being churched after childbirth, and parish ales were allowed to continue.

Slowly and grudgingly the parish settled into the ways of a reformed church. There was no more talk of rebellion. The accounts became more secular. Before Edward’s time, Sir Christopher highlighted religious concerns when writing the accounts but towards the end of his life these featured less and less as he seems to have become bogged down in the minutiae of day to day secular concerns.

He presented the wardens’ accounts for the last time in November 1573. After a period of illness he died the following May, well into his ninetieth decade, after fifty four years as parish priest of Morebath and was buried by his parishioners with honour and love.

“He had been their priest, Catholic and Protestant for fifty-four years... He had been the spirit of Morebath, the chronicler of its dramatic and sometimes tragic share of the religious revolutions of that turbulent age.”

Ref: The Voices of Morbath by Eamon Duffey



Thank you S.P.O.T. volunteers

Pat Perry writes:



I would like to say a big THANK-YOU to all volunteers who kept the shop open whilst I was in Canada, especially to Pam, Cerys and Gill who took over the management.

I had a wonderful time in Canada, was able to hug my granddaughter, how quickly they grow up.

The flight was good, a relief once I had gone through security at Heathrow. The Canadian end was a bit more intense but I played the 'OLD CARD' and asked for help. Then, there was my granddaughter waiting for me. Five weeks of family, friends, horses, dogs, mountains, quad bikes and a Turkey-dinner as it was Thanksgiving whilst I was there.

Turkey Supper... I was volunteered to help by my daughter-in-law. Because of Covid, Turkey-dinner was 'Take out' or 'Tailgate'. Take your meals home or sit in the back of a truck with the tailgate down. Band playing, raffles (a year's supply of beef!), stalls selling pies, vegetables, autumn decorations! A complete Turkey-dinner in a box and a slice of pie: pumpkin, apple, or mixed berry. We served 630 meals; I had a very important task to stick the labels on the completed Turkey-dinner box. We were there for six hours but the fun side was cowboys in white hats saying 'Howdy' and when I answered ... 'You'r English'. Such friendly people, great fun and we had a mention in the local gazette!

We took our supper home, with friends and family there were 14 sitting around a camp fire. A lovely day.

On one of our road trips my son David drove through deserted back roads, fields of elk, buffalo and wild horses. Over vast plains, wooded valleys, and always snow-covered mountains. As we climbed higher the roads were covered in snow, some times rough as a tracked vehicles had made the surface corrugated. We stopped at a favourite place, Spray Lake, for photos - not for long as it was cold and signs stating 'Bear activity'. We ended up in Banff where we met Lesley, Liz's daughter. Another great day.

The time flew by and it was time to return, Covid restrictions were easier on the way back, just a day 2 PCR. All good.

The shop was lovely on my return THANK YOU!

Make your own Jesse Tree

Sent by Jeanne James:

The Jesse Tree is a unique Advent custom and a fun activity for teaching your children/grand children about the Bible at Christmas. The tradition traces back as far as the middle ages. The earliest Jesse Trees were made of tapestries, carvings, and stained glass. These visual displays allowed people who could not read or write to learn about the Scriptures.

As we all know the word Advent means “arrival.” Because Advent is a time to anticipate and prepare for the arrival of Christ at Christmas, a Jesse Tree project is a great way to celebrate with your family.

The Jesse Tree represents the family tree, or genealogy, of Jesus Christ. It tells the story of God’s salvation plan beginning with Creation and continuing through the Old Testament, to the coming of the Messiah.

The name “Jesse Tree” comes from Isaiah 11,1: *“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.”* The verse refers to King David’s father, Jesse. The “shoot” that grew from the “stem of Jesse,” that is, the royal line of David, is Jesus Christ.



Each day of Advent a homemade ornament is added to the Jesse Tree, a small tree made of evergreen branches or any creative materials you choose to use. You might wish to use paper and crayon to draw ornaments, cardboard and markers, card stock and paint, or felt, yarn, and glue. You can make the tree as simple or as elaborate as you choose.

One popular idea for the handmade ornaments is to trace the many promises of God through the stories in the Bible, beginning with Creation and leading up to the birth of Christ. For example, an apple might represent the story of Adam and Eve. A rainbow could symbolize the story of Noah’s Ark and the Flood. A burning bush to tell the story of Moses. The Ten Commandments could be illustrated with two tablets of stone. A large fish or whale would represent Jonah and the whale. As you make the ornaments together, remember to discuss what they mean so the children will enjoy crafting as they learn about the Bible.

Each day of Advent, when you decorate your tree by adding an ornament, take some time to reinforce the symbolism behind the ornament. You can read a Bible verse or expound on a related Bible story. Think of ways to tie in your lessons to the lineage of Jesus and the Season of Advent.

News from Beechcroft St Paul's

Sue Biles writes:

Beechcroft St Paul's Primary School was inspected by the Church of England Education Office on 18th October. The visiting inspector, a non-stipendiary priest and former teacher has written a glowing report and has also provided some very constructive ideas to improve understanding and spirituality within the school.

Key findings of the Report: Strong leadership, at all levels has used the Christian vision to inform improvements across the school. This has created an inclusive culture where aspirations are rising, and all feel part of a caring community. The vision champions the understanding that everyone is special to God. Therefore, vulnerable and SEND pupils receive high quality support, enabling them to flourish.

Collective worship has a central role in daily life. It is inclusive, invitational, and consequently challenges people's thinking and actions. A skilled and enthusiastic religious education subject leader has introduced new approaches to learning which the children enjoy. Although there is need to develop a more robust accurate tracking system. The Inspector also suggested that the children should have opportunities to plan and lead worship. There is a need to further develop ways for the children to develop their spirituality and to enable the pupils to develop a vocabulary and language that they feel confident to use to express their thinking. Another area of development, he suggested the school should create partnerships with other communities, either nationally or globally, so that the pupils' knowledge of diverse cultures and disadvantage is extended.

Cath Crossley, the Head Teacher, has been in place since September 2019 and this report is a testament to her challenging work in creating a supportive learning environment for staff and pupils, where everybody is encouraged to achieve to the best of their ability. It also recognises the work of the Assistant Headteacher, Caroline Hawker, in planning and implementing Collective Worship and the RE lead teacher, Becky Greet. The Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust have also recognised the role of Julia Moore as the Chair of Governors in supporting the team in the creation and the implementation of the vision. Thanks also go to Father Gregory for his role in supporting and delivering Collective Worship and helping the teaching and leadership teams to understand aspects of theology.

Earlier in the year I asked for your prayers for the school as we prepared for SLAMS. On behalf of the staff and governors who worked very hard to be ready for the inspection thank you for your prayers and your continued interest in the children and the school.

What to do in your garden in the month of December

Katherine Harrison writes:

I can hardly believe that December is upon us, where has the year gone! So here is a list of gardening jobs to keep you busy in the short, chilly days of December.

- Pile straw around tender shrubs to protect them from cold.
- Check stored bulbs for any signs of rot.
- Plant tulip bulbs outside. Plant now and they will flower in April/May. Top tip: make sure they are the right way up!
- Winter prune large fruit trees to control their shape and size.
- Continue to plan next years crops and order seeds.
- Flower seeds to sow in December: Sweet peas (if you haven't already); Laurentia; Geraniums; Hardy cyclamens; Snapdragons
- Lift and divide large clumps of rhubarb.
- Bring hyacinths into the house to flower. Place in a cool bright spot.
- Plant amaryllis bulbs for super flowers (this will take around 8 weeks to flower).
- Move your houseplants to a window to maximise hours of sunlight and reduce the amount you're watering them. Make sure you read their labels!
- Check your paths for moss. If you find any, make sure to scrub it away.



And finally, the Christmas poinsettia. Oh I am hopeless at keeping this house plant alive. 1 month maximum, and then it's straight in the bin, shrivelled and famished. So, as Google would say, here is how to take care of your poinsettia correctly: *"They do not like cool nights, very hot dry rooms or big fluctuations in temperatures, so keep them where there is a constant average temperature, avoiding draughts, cold windows or even very bright spots that can get very hot in the middle of the day. They like plenty of water but let the compost dry out before giving them a really good soak, standing the pot in a sink full of water and leaving it to stand for 10 minutes or so before letting the excess water drain from the pot."*

(Not an impossible task. I was given one as a Christmas gift in 2019 and it still looks great. See the photo! Fr Gregory)

Priestly Wardrobe

Fr Tony Ball writes:

I decided it was time to have a clear out of the clothes in my bedroom wardrobe. I was going to be ruthless, there was to be no room for sentimentality, nor for the “I might wear it sometime” train of thought. It began well. Shirts with collars too tight or sleeves too short were discarded. Trousers with waist bands several inches too small, a visual reminder of days long past, joined the shirts in the black sack. Then the purge began to run out of steam. The excuses crept in. “*I remember buying that in...*”; “*That was a gift from...*”; “*I can wear those in the garden...*” As the sack emptied, the wardrobe was refilled.

The rot set in when I reached the Vestments, the Chasubles some of which I haven't worn in a long time. There was the Sackcloth Lenten set given to me by a Priest almost 50 years ago when they were already many years old. The Blue set given to me so I could use them on Feasts of Our Lady. One set in particular stopped me in my tracks: purple and home-made. A home communicant, an elderly housebound lady made them for me when I was a Curate in West Bromwich. They are plain, simply cut, not adorned with embroidery or appliqué work. But, they are priceless. Why? because they were made and given in love. I wore them all through my prison ministry and “retired” them when I first began to say Masses at St. Paul's.

The season of Christmas will soon be upon us. Millions of people will turn their thoughts to buying presents. How much to spend, what to buy, who to buy for, such thoughts can take over the Christmas preparations. Worry and stress and sometimes panic, can easily replace the joy of giving and receiving.

A gift... given and received in love is at the very heart of the celebration of the Nativity. God clearly shows his love for us, enshrined in the miracle of the Incarnation, the coming of Jesus into our world. This gift of love was presented to our world in the simplicity and humility of a Babe in a room behind an inn.

God's gift, freely given, is a gift all can receive who choose to accept it. Undeserved it may be, it is there for all to reach out and accept. Those who do, respond in love to love.

The Carol “*In the bleak midwinter*” contains some lines which ask and answer a very important question. They ask: “*What shall I give Him poor as I am?*” They answer: “*Give my heart*” May it be so!

May the Peace which the angels proclaimed, the Joy in Mary's heart, and the Love of the Christ child be God's gift to you this Christmas. Fr.T

**Calendar, Service times,
and Prayer Intentions**

Anniversaries of death

**The Order of Morning and Evening Prayer
at St. Paul's**

Calendar for December 2021

| | | | |
|-----|------------------|--|-----------------|
| WED | 1 st | <i>Monthly Requiem</i> | 10am |
| THU | 2 nd | St. Bibiana, Virgin & Martyr | 6pm |
| FRI | 3 rd | St. Francis Xavier | 12noon |
| SAT | 4 th | St. Barbara, Virgin & Martyr | 9.30am |
| SUN | 5 th | 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT | 10am, 4pm |
| MON | 6 th | St. Nicholas, Bishop | 9am |
| TUE | 7 th | St. Ambrose, Bishop | 9am |
| WED | 8 th | IMMACULATE CONCEPTION | 10am, 12 noon* |
| THU | 9 th | <i>Feria</i> | 6pm |
| FRI | 10 th | <i>Feria</i> | 12noon |
| SAT | 11 th | <i>Of Our Lady</i> | 9.30am |
| SUN | 12 th | 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT | 10am, 4pm |
| MON | 13 th | St. Lucy, Virgin & Martyr | 9am |
| TUE | 14 th | <i>Feria</i> | 9am |
| WED | 15 th | <i>Feria (Ember Day)</i> | 10am |
| THU | 16 th | <i>Feria - Novena</i> | 6pm |
| FRI | 17 th | <i>Monthly Anointing (Ember Day) - Novena</i> | 12noon |
| SAT | 18 th | <i>Of Our Lady (Ember Day) - Novena</i> | 9.30am |
| SUN | 19 th | 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - Novena | 10am, 4pm |
| MON | 20 th | <i>Vigil - Novena</i> | 9am |
| TUE | 21 st | ST. THOMAS APOSTLE - Novena | 9am |
| WED | 22 nd | <i>Feria - Novena</i> | 10am |
| THU | 23 rd | <i>Feria - Novena</i> | 6pm |
| FRI | 24 th | VIGIL - Novena | 12noon, 11.30pm |
| SAT | 25 th | NATIVITY OF OUR LORD | 8am, 10am |
| SUN | 26 th | ST. STEPHEN DEACON, PROTOMARTYR | 10am, 4pm |
| MON | 27 th | ST. JOHN APOSTLE & EVANGELIST | 10am |
| TUE | 28 th | HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS | 10am |
| WED | 29 th | ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY | 10am |
| THU | 30 th | <i>6th day within the Octave of Christmas</i> | 6pm |
| FRI | 31 st | St. Sylvester I, Pope | 12noon |

** Mass for the Forward in Faith Cell - all are welcome.*

*We pray for...*

- 1st Departed - *Frances Geroghty, Ted Marshall, Sheila Smallman*
 2nd Priests & vocations - *Max Williams pr., Olive Ames*
 3rd Dying - *Bessie May Martin, Robert Keat*
 4th Shrine of Walsingham - *Sam Eades*
- 5th Our Parish
 6th Children living in poverty - *Trixie Babb*
 7th Chapter of St. Aldhelm: our Servers - *Ben Bowring*
 8th Greater devotion to Our Lady
 9th Our Diocese - *Shaun Tolman, Brian Smart*
 10th Seat of Ebbsfleet - *Herbert Rod, Olivia Harding*
 11th Cell of O.L.W. - *Alex*
- 12th Our Parish
 13th Homeless & destitute - *Kay Berriman*
 14th Every conceived but endangered human life - *John Seymour*
 15th Conversion of sinners - *Ethel Teece*
 16th Those suffering from depression or addictions - *Mo Palmer*
 17th Sick
 18th A spirit of penitence - *Edith Sibley, Michael Houghton bp.*
- 19th Our Parish - *Madeline Pryer, Freda Taylor, George Winspear*
 20th Those in prison - *Richard Harbord*
 21st All parishes & churches dedicated to St. Thomas - *Ali Thomas*
 22nd All who do not know God and his Christ - *Joseph Howell-Jones pr.*
 23rd Families
 24th All for whom Christmas is a difficult time
 25th Our Parish - *Peter Withey, Jessie Evans, Fred Semmons, Andrew Rook, Edna Sale, Margaret Hornby*
- 26th Our Parish - *Les Bugler, Andree Dandou*
 27th NHS & Social care workers - *John Dawson*
 28th Children: victims of violence, abuse - *Ian Edgar, Eileen Clarey, Donald Turner pr.*
 29th Conversion of England - *Celia Biles, Lilia Bullock*
 30th All who lost loved ones this year - *Thelma, Stanley Waight*
 31st God's blessing on 2022 - *Don Taylor*

If there are names missing from the list or you want to add names, please, talk to the Vicar.

Open, O Lord, my mouth to bless thy holy Name; cleanse also my heart from all vain, evil, and wandering thoughts; enlighten my understanding and kindle my affections; that I may worthily, attentively, and devoutly recite this Morning Prayer, and so be meet to be heard before the presence of thy divine Majesty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MORNING PRAYER

V. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

V. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

R. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt amongst us.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O Lord, open my lips.

R. And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

V. O God, make speed to save me.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!

V. Let us rejoice in the Lord; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him!

R. This day you shall know that the Lord comes and in the morning you shall see his glory.

V. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hands are the depths of the earth; and the heights of the mountains are his.

R. And in the morning you shall see his glory.

V. The sea is his, for who but he made it; and his hands fashioned the dry land. O come, let us worship and fall down, and weep before the Lord who made us! For he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

R. This day you shall know that the Lord comes and in the morning you shall see his glory.

V. Today if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts: As in the provocation, on the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted me, and put me to the test, and they saw my works.

R. And in the morning you shall see his glory.

V. For forty years I loathed that generation, and I said: They always err in heart, they have not known my ways, so I swore in my wrath: they shall not enter my rest.

R. This day you shall know that the Lord comes and in the morning you shall see his glory.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

R. This day you shall know that the Lord comes and in the morning you shall see his glory.

HYMN

Until Christmas:

Hark, a herald voice is calling;
Christ is nigh, it seems to say;
Cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day.

Startled at the solemn warning,
Let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her Sun, all sloth dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.

Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from heaven;
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all to be forgiven.

So when next He comes with glory,
Wrapping all the earth in fear,
May He then as our defender
On the clouds of heaven appear.

Honour, glory, virtue, merit,
To the Father and the Son,
With the co-eternal Spirit,
While eternal ages run. Amen.

From Christmas:

From lands that see the sun arise
To earth's remotest boundaries,
The Virgin-born today we sing,
The Son of Mary, Christ the King.

Blest Author of this earthly frame,
To take a servant's form he came,
That, liberating flesh by flesh,
Whom he had made might live afresh.

In that chaste parent's holy womb
Celestial grace hath found its home;
And she, as earthly bride unknown,
Yet calls that Offspring blest her own.

The mansion of the modest breast
Becomes a shrine where God shall rest:
The pure and undefiled One
Conceived in her womb the Son.

That Son, that Royal Son she bore,
Whom Gabriel's voice had told afore;
Whom, in his mother yet concealed,
The infant Baptist had revealed.

The manger and the straw he bore,
The cradle did he not abhor;
By milk in infant portions fed,
Who gives e'en fowls their daily bread.

The heavenly chorus filled the sky,
The Angels sang to God on high,
What time to shepherds, watching lone,
They made creation's Shepherd known.

All honour, laud, and glory be,
O Jesu, Virgin-born to thee:
All glory, as is ever meet,
To Father and to Paraclete. Amen.

The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|----|---------------|--|
| 1 | Psalm(s) 5, 7 | Isaiah 28,1-13 Matthew 12,38-end | 8 | 62, 63 | Genesis 3,1-5 Luke 1,26-28 |
| 2 | 42, 43 | Isaiah 28,14-end Matthew 13,1-23 | 9 | 53, 54, 60 | Isaiah 32 Matthew 15,21-28 |
| 3 | 25, 26 | Isaiah 29,1-14 Matthew 13,24-43 | 10 | 85, 86 | Isaiah 33,1-22 Matthew 15,29-end |
| 4 | 9, 10 | Isaiah 29,15-end Matthew 13,44-end | 11 | 145 | Isaiah 35 Matthew 16,1-12 |
| 5 | 80 | Isaiah 64,1-7 Matthew 11,2-11 | 12 | 12, 14 | Isaiah 25,1-9 1 Corinthians 4,1-5 |
| 6 | 44 | Isaiah 30,1-18 Matthew 14,1-12 | 13 | 40 | Isaiah 38,1-8 & 21-22 Matthew 16,13-end |
| 7 | 56, 57 | Isaiah 30,19-end Matthew 14,13-end | 14 | 70, 74 | Isaiah 38,9-20 Matthew 17,1-13 |

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--|----------|----------|------------------------------------|
| 15 | 96 | Isaiah 39 Matthew 17,14-21 | 25 | 110, 117 | Isaiah 62,1-5 Matthew 1,18-end |
| 16 | 76, 97 | Zephaniah 1,1 - 2,3 Matthew 17,22-end | 26 | 13, 150 | Jeremiah 26,12-15 Acts 6 |
| 17 | 77, 98 | Zephaniah 3,1-13 Matthew 18,1-20 | 27 | 21 | Exodus 33,12-end 1 John 2,1-11 |
| 18 | 71 | Zephaniah 3,14-end Matthew 18,21-end | 28 | 36 | Baruch 4,21-27 Matthew 2,13-18 |
| 19 | 144 | Isaiah 32,1-8 Revelation 22,6-end | 29 | 3, 11 | Jonah 1 Colossians 1,1-14 |
| 20 | 46, 95 | Malachi 1 Matthew 19,1-12 | 30 | 111, 112 | Jonah 2 Colossians 1,15-23 |
| 21 | 92, 146 | 2 Samuel 15,17-21 John 11,1-16 | 31 | 102 | Jonah 3 & 4 Colossians 1,24-end |
| 22 | 124, 125, 126, 127 | Malachi 2,1 - 3,12 Matthew 19,16-end | Jan 1 | 103 | Genesis 17,1-13 Romans 2,17-end |
| 23 | 128, 129, 130, 131 | Malachi 3,13 - end of 4 Matthew 23,1-12 | Jan 2 | 87 | Exodus 3,1-6 Acts 4,5-12 |
| 24 | 45, 113 | Nahum 1 Matthew 23,13-28 | | | |

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS – *One of the following antiphons is used:*

Before Christmas: We should live righteously and godly, looking for that blessed hope and the coming of the Lord.

From Christmas: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good will, alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, *
who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, *
born of the house of his servant David.
Through his holy prophets God promised of old *
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
To show mercy to our ancestors, *
and to remember his holy covenant.
This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: *
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear, *
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation *
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God *
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, *
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, *
world without end. Amen.

Before Christmas: We should live righteously and godly, looking for that blessed hope and the coming of the Lord.

From Christmas: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good will, alleluia, alleluia.

V. Let us pray. – *Intercessions* are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (the world), for those in need, and for the dead. Then follows one of the Collects:

Before Christmas: Stir up, O Lord, we pray, your strength, and come among us, that whereas through our sins and wickedness we do justly apprehend your judgment hanging over us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us. Who lives and reigns with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. R. Amen.

From Christmas: Grant, we beseech you, almighty God, that the new birth of your Only-begotten Son as man may set us free, who are held by the old bondage under the yoke of sin. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

V. The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life.
R. Amen.

V. Let us bless the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

V. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

Morning Prayer ends with the final Antiphon of Our Lady:

Mother of Christ, hear thou thy people's cry - Star of the deep and Portal of the sky! - Mother of Him who thee from nothing made. - Sinking we strive and call to thee for aid: - O, by what joy which Gabriel brought to thee, - Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.

V. After childbirth thou didst remain a virgin.

R. Intercede for us, O Mother of God.

V. Let us pray. O God, who, by the fruitful virginity of blessed Mary, hast bestowed upon mankind the reward of eternal salvation: grant, we beseech thee, that we may experience her intercession, through whom we have been made worthy to receive the author of life: our Lord Jesus Christ thy Son.

R. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

V. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

V. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

R. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt amongst us.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O God, make speed to save me. R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!

HYMN

Until Christmas:

Creator of the stars of night,
Thy people's everlasting light,
O Jesu, Saviour of us all,
Regard thy servants when they call.

Thou, grieving at the bitter cry
Of all creation doomed to die,
Didst come to save a ruined race
With healing gifts of hea'nly grace.

Thou camest, Bridegroom of the Bride,
As drew the world to evening-tide,
Proceeding from a virgin shrine,
The Son of Man, yet Lord Divine.

From Christmas:

Jesus, the Ransomer of man,
Who, ere created light began,
Didst from the sovereign Father spring,
His power and glory equalling.

At thy great name, exalted now,
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;
All things in heaven and earth shall own
That thou art Lord and King alone.

To thee, O Holy One, we pray,
Our Judge in that tremendous day,
Preserve us, while we dwell below,
From every onslaught of the foe.

All praise, eternal Son, to thee,
Whose Advent sets thy people free,
Whom we the Father we adore,
And Spirit blest, for evermore. Amen.

The Father's Light and Splendour thou,
Their endless Hope to thee that bow;
Accept the prayers and praise to-day
That through the world thy servants pay.

Salvation's Author, call to mind
 How, taking form of humankind,
 Born of a Virgin undefiled,
 Thou in man's flesh becam'st a Child.

The heavens above, the rolling main
 And all that earth's wide realms contain,
 With joyous voice now loudly sing
 The glory of their new-born King.

And we who, by thy precious Blood
 From sin redeemed, are marked for God,
 On this the day that saw thy birth,
 Sing the new song of ransomed earth.

O Lord, the Virgin-born, to thee
 Eternal praise and glory be,
 Whom with the Father we adore
 And Holy Ghost forevermore. Amen.

The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------|---|----|--------------|---|
| 1 | Psalm 30 | Isaiah 43,14-end Revelation 21,1-8 | 12 | 50 v. 1-6 | Isaiah 35 Luke 1,57-66 |
| 2 | 31 | Isaiah 44,1-8 Revelation 21,9-21 | 13 | 20, 21 | Isaiah 49,14-25 1 Thessalonians 5,1-11 |
| 3 | 16, 17 | Isaiah 44,9-23 Revelation 21,22 - 22,5 | 14 | 22 | Isaiah 50 1 Thessalonians 5,12-end |
| 4 | 27, 28 | Isaiah 44,24 - 45,13 Revelation 22,6-end | 15 | 82 | Isaiah 51,1-8 2 Thessalonians 1 |
| 5 | 75 | Isaiah 40,1-11 Revelation 1,1-25 | 16 | 23, 29 | Isaiah 51,9-16 2 Thessalonians 2 |
| 6 | 33 | Isaiah 45,14-end 1 Thessalonians 1 | 17 | 49 | Isaiah 51,17-end 2 Thessalonians 3 |
| 7 | 147 | Genesis 3,6-15 Romans 5,12-21 | 18 | 35 | Isaiah 52,1-12 Jude |
| 8 | 34 | Proverbs 8,12-25 Luke 1,26-28 | 19 | 123 | Isaiah 10,33 - 11,10 Matthew 1,18-end |
| 9 | 73 | Isaiah 48,1-11 1 Thessalonians 2 | 20 | 4, 41 | Isaiah 52,13 - end of 53 2 Peter 1 |
| 10 | 90 | Isaiah 48,12-end 1 Thessalonians 3 | 21 | 139 | Job 42,1-6 1 Peter 1,3-12 |
| 11 | 93, 94 | Isaiah 49,1-13 1 Thessalonians 4 | 22 | 24, 48 | Isaiah 55 2 Peter 2 |

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------|---------------------------------------|----------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 23 | 89 v. 1-37 | Isaiah 56,1-8 2 Peter 3 | 29 | 6, 132 | Isaiah 57,15-end John 1,1-18 |
| 24 | 19 | Zechariah 2 Revelation 1,1-8 | 30 | 65, 84 | Isaiah 59,1-5 John 1,19-28 |
| 25 | 8 | Isaiah 65,17-25 Philippians 2,5-11 | 31 | 47, 148 | Jeremiah 23,1-6 Colossians 2,8-15 |
| 26 | 1, 2 | Genesis 4,1-10 Matthew 23,34-end | Jan 1 | 115 | Deuteronomy 30 Acts 3,1-16 |
| 27 | 15, | Isaiah 6,1-8 1 John 5,1-12 | Jan 2 | 135 | Exodus 3,7-15 Mark 16,15-18 |
| 28 | 18 | Isaiah 49,14-25 Mark 10,13-16 | | | |

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

MAGNIFICAT

Before Christmas: Behold, the Name of the Lord comes from far, and the whole earth is full of his glory.

From Christmas: When the sun shall have risen from heaven, you shall see the King of kings proceeding from the Father, as a bridegroom from his chamber.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,+
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;*
 he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed;+
the Almighty has done great things for me*
 and holy is his name.
He has mercy on those who fear him,*
 from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm*
 and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones*
 and lifting up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things*
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,*
to remember his promise of mercy,
The promise made to our ancestors,*
to Abraham and his children for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Before Christmas: Behold, the Name of the Lord comes from far, and the whole earth is full of his glory.

From Christmas: When the sun shall have risen from heaven, you shall see the King of kings proceeding from the Father, as a bridegroom from his chamber.

V. Let us pray. – *Intercessions are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (world), for those in need, our Benefactors, and for the dead. Then one of the following Collects is said:*

Before Christmas: Stir up, O Lord, we pray, your strength, and come among us, that whereas through our sins and wickedness we do justly apprehend your judgment hanging over us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us. Who lives and reigns with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

From Christmas: Grant, we beseech you, almighty God, that the new birth of your Only-begotten Son as man may set us free, who are held by the old bondage under the yoke of sin. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

V. Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All: 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.

V. Let us bless the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

V. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

Optional private prayer to be said after Evening Prayer: To the Most Holy and undivided Trinity, to our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified, to the fruitful Virginity of the most blessed and most glorious Mary, always a Virgin, and to the holiness of all the Saints be ascribed everlasting praise, honour, and glory, by all creatures, and to us be granted the forgiveness of all our sins, world without end. Amen.

The O-antiphons have been used at Evening Prayer since the 8th century. Each antiphon is a name of Christ, one of his attributes mentioned in Scripture. They are a compact and beautiful theology that draws on biblical themes of the Old Testament; as such they proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies and hopes. They also express current longings rooted in those themes. Why not make them part of our Advent prayers, meditation and Christmas preparation?!

Dec 17: O Wisdom, which comes forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end even to end, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: come to teach us the way of prudence.

Dec 18: O Adonai, and leader of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush, and gave him the Law on Sinai: come to ransom us with outstretched arm.

Dec 19: O Root of Jesse, who stands as an ensign of the peoples, before whom kings will shut their mouths, whom the nations will entreat, come to free us, refuse now to be hindered.

Dec 20: O Key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel; who opens, and no one closes; who closes, and no one opens: come, and lead the fettered ones out from the prison-house, those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

Dec 21: O Dayspring, splendour of eternal light, and Sun of justice: come, and illuminate those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

Dec 22: O King of nations, and their desire, and cornerstone who makes them one, come, and save humankind, which you formed from clay.

Dec 23: O Emmanuel, our king and lawgiver, the nations' expectation, and their Saviour: come to save us, Lord, our God.

From the Book of Common Prayer (for Advent)

3rd Sunday of Advent: *O Lord Jesu Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

In this Collect Jesus of Nazareth is thought of as the exalted Messiah, who has been given the name of “the Lord” by his Father. He reigns in heaven at the right hand of the Father as the Lord of lords and King of kings over the whole universe and also over the kingdom of the Father, wherein are all the redeemed and holy angels.

As we address the Lord Jesus Christ, we that He, the Saviour, caused John the Baptist to prepare the way for himself, as the Messiah of Israel. We are not here presuming to tell the Lord Jesus what He already knows perfectly; but, rather, we are remembering in his presence what we need to have in mind in this act of prayer.

God’s people pray especially this Sunday and during the week for those who are ordained ministers, that they may be faithful heralds of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ even as John the Baptist was a faithful herald of the ministry of the Messiah at the First Coming. The description of a Christian minister (from the original Greek words of the New Testament) is in terms of a rower (*huperetes*) in the Church’s galley and as a steward (dispenser/housekeeper) in the household of God. As slaves/rowers in the Church’s galley, ministers receive orders and the timing of their rowing from the Captain, who is also their pilot on the voyage. As stewards or housekeepers, ministers also serve those who attend Christ’s Banquet with that which the Lord himself has provided. If the ministers are faithful as rowers and stewards they will be God’s agents in bringing people to repentance from sin and commitment to holiness and service of the Lord.

No-one knows when the Lord Jesus will return to earth in power and great glory, accompanied by the holy angels. Yet it is most necessary that the household of God, the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, be in such a state of faithfulness, godliness and preparedness, that they may be found an acceptable people at his Appearing. They want to hear at the Judgement his words: “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

The Rev’d Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

From the Book of Common Prayer (for Christmas)

Christmas Day: *Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

The Collect is addressed to the Almighty Father, as in the Creed --- “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty.”

In addressing the Father, and in his holy presence, we remind ourselves with due reverence and awe, of the supremely important Event that lies behind Christmas Day. That the eternal Father has given to the world, has sent into the world, his only-begotten Son, and in doing so has caused him to assume as his own, to take unto himself, our very human nature; and to achieve this by taking that human nature within the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and being born from her, both as her son and as the Incarnate Son of God. Thus the One Person of the Only-Begotten Son by making his own our human nature became One Person with two natures, one divine and one human. He is Immanuel, God with us.

On the basis of this Fact and this Truth, we are well placed in genuine humility to offer our earnest petition to the Father in the Name of this Son. “Grant” is a verb that suggests that what we ask for only God can supply. We pray that we (who have been baptized by water and the Spirit and made God’s children by being adopted into his family) may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit. That is we need God’s immediate assistance through the presence of the Holy Ghost in order to live daily as faithful children of God, disciples of Christ, who call *his* Father, “*our* Father.”

We celebrate the Incarnation at a specific time (“as at this time”) in the Christian Year; but, we are to live as God’s born-again people *every* day.

The Son of God may be said to have had two “births” - an origin/birth of the Father (and beyond our understanding) in eternity, and a birth as man from the Blessed Virgin Mary in space and time. Likewise his disciples may be said to have had two births - one from their mothers and one from above (in holy Baptism with regeneration). By their second birth they are united through the Holy Ghost with the Incarnate Son and in him to the Father.

The Collect ends with a full recognition of the sovereignty of the one God as Three Persons: the Father, the Son. and the Holy Ghost.

The Rev’d Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

Feast of the month

St. Thomas Becket, Bishop & Martyr: *“The murder that shook the Middle Ages”*

29th December

(The following article is from the Britishmuseum Blog with some additions from Anglican and Catholic sources.)

A strong man who wavered for a moment, but then learned one cannot come to terms with evil, and so became a strong churchman, a martyr, and a saint—that was Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, murdered in his cathedral on the 29th of December in 1170.

The assassination of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral on 29 December 1170 changed the course of history. Becket was one of the most powerful figures of his time, serving as royal Chancellor and later as Archbishop of Canterbury. Initially a close friend of King Henry II, the two men became engaged in a bitter dispute that culminated in Becket’s shocking murder by knights with close ties to the king.

Who was Thomas Becket?

Becket was a second-generation French immigrant, born around 1120 in Cheapside, in the City of London, to Gilbert and Matilda, who had left Normandy following the Norman Conquest. His father was a well-connected merchant but the family were neither excessively wealthy nor powerful. Becket was sent to school at Merton Priory and, after a few years studying in Paris, he eventually gained employment through one of his father’s friends as a clerk for Theobald, the then Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket was described by his contemporaries as intelligent, charming and authoritative and, in 1155, he got his biggest break. Recognising his talents, Theobald suggested that Henry II appoint Becket as Chancellor of England. He and the king quickly became close friends, hunting, gaming and travelling around England together. Becket embraced life in the royal court: he is said by his contemporary biographers to have enjoyed vast wealth, throwing lavish parties, decorating his residences with beautiful furnishings and making numerous journeys to France on his own ships.

Rise and fall

When the position of Archbishop of Canterbury became vacant, Becket was put forward. Given his lifestyle and reputation he was an unlikely

candidate but the king had other ideas. Henry was keen to appoint his close friend to the role but, crucially, he wanted him to continue as Chancellor. With Becket in both positions, Henry saw an opportunity to exercise greater authority over the Church as well as the state. Becket was appointed Archbishop on 23 May 1162 and consecrated on 3 June. However, at some point during the rest of that year, and against the king's wishes, Becket resigned as Chancellor. His actions drove a wedge between him and the king which would never be repaired. From this point on, Becket's relationship with Henry began to deteriorate. A series of disputes ensued regarding the division of power between the Crown and the Church. By 1164, tensions were at an all-time high and, in October, Becket was summoned to appear before the King's council and ordered to forfeit all his personal property. He refused to accept the terms of his punishment and, fearing further repercussions from the king, he fled to France.

Life in exile

Becket remained in exile in France for six years. During this time Henry flexed his power in England. His most blatant snub of his old friend's authority was his decision to have his son, Henry the Young King, crowned in June 1170 by Becket's long-standing enemy, the Archbishop of York. Becket appealed to the Pope and, under significant pressure, Henry agreed to reopen negotiations. Henry promised to restore Becket's rights as Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket was reassured that it would be safe to return to England. However, his final act was to punish those involved in the unauthorised coronation. Before leaving France Becket issued three letters excommunicating the Archbishop of York and two other bishops. This act was to have devastating consequences upon his return to England.

The lead up to the murder

Becket returned from exile on 1 December 1170. Contemporary reports record that he was greeted on his journey back to the Cathedral by cheering crowds and rejoicing monks, but he faced increasing hostility by the authorities loyal to the king. Meanwhile, the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of London and Salisbury, furious that they had been excommunicated, travelled to Henry's royal court in Normandy where they relayed Becket's actions to the king. Henry was outraged and, although it is unclear whether he ever specifically ordered retribution for Becket's actions, his furious outburst prompted four knights to travel to Canterbury in search of Becket.

The crime scene



We have five eye-witness accounts of Becket's murder, all of which broadly agree on the details of what took place. One key account was written by a man named Edward Grim, who was so close to Becket during the skirmish that he was wounded by one of the knight's swords. Grim tells us that when the four knights arrived at Canterbury Cathedral, Becket was in the Archbishop's Palace. They attempted to arrest him but he refused. Becket was persuaded by the monks to take refuge in the church, but the knights pursued him, bursting into the Cathedral with swords drawn, terrifying those inside. The knights then rushed at him, roughly manhandling and dragging him, intending to kill him outside the church, or carry him away in chains.

As Grim recounts, Becket held tight onto one of the Cathedral's pillars to prevent them seizing him, and it was at this point that one of the knights raised his sword for the first time, bringing it down on Becket, slicing off the crown of his head. Two of the other knights then started to attack Becket and most of the monks fled. The third blow brought the Archbishop's life to an end.

The aftermath

Chaos ensued following the murder, and with none of those present knowing what to do next, the body remained where it had fallen for several hours. Some individuals dipped parts of their clothes in his spilled blood, or collected it in small vessels to take away in anticipation of Becket's future sanctity. After spending the night on the high altar of the Cathedral, he was buried by the monks the next day in the crypt. Reports immediately circulated of miraculous healings connected to Becket. Facing increasing pressure from the people of Canterbury, the monks opened the crypt of the Cathedral so pilgrims could visit his tomb. An extraordinary wave of miracles was recorded and, in recognition of this, Becket was made a saint by the Pope on 21 February 1173. It was one of the fastest canonisations in history. Becket's reputation as a miracle-working saint spread quickly and people from all over Europe started to flock to Canterbury in the hope that they would be healed. As well as visiting the tomb, pilgrims could also purchase a mixture of his

blood and water, called St. Thomas' Water, which was bottled and sold by opportunistic monks in small lead vessels called ampulla. Henry II, in a public act of penance for his involvement in the murder, visited the tomb in 1174, granting royal approval to Becket's cult.

Becket's death and subsequent miracles transformed Canterbury Cathedral into one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in Europe. In 1220 his body was moved from the crypt to a glittering new shrine in a purpose-built chapel upstairs in the Cathedral.

In death Becket remained a figure of opposition to unbridled power and became seen as the quintessential defender of the rights of the Church. To this end you can find images of his murder in churches across Latin Christendom, from Germany and Spain, to Italy and Norway. Becket was, and remains, a truly European saint. His relics at Canterbury were visited by people from across the continent until 1538, when Henry VIII would label him a traitor, order the destruction of his shrine and try to wipe him from history altogether.

By 1538 many important churches throughout Europe had obtained some of St. Thomas' relics. Parts of his elbow-bones ended up in the Primatial Cathedral of Hungary in Esztergom. In 2016 the President and the Primate-Cardinal of Hungary brought this relic to Canterbury for a week where it was placed over the place of St. Thomas' martyrdom and venerated both by Anglican and Catholic bishops, clergy, and faithful.



No one becomes a saint without struggle, especially with himself. Thomas knew he must stand firm in defence of truth and right, even at the cost of his life. We also must take a stand in the face of pressures - against dishonesty, deceit, destruction of life - at the cost of popularity, convenience, promotion, and even greater goods.

St. Thomas is patron saint of secular (diocesan) and parish clergy.

If you search "***Becket 1964 Full Movie***" on YouTube, it is available to watch for free; with Richard Burton, Peter O'Toole, and Donald Wolfitt. It can be a good, spiritual yet entertaining evening program during Advent.

Meditations on the O-Antiphons

In each Parish Magazine I try to ensure that there is some food for our soul and faith - this is why I often write about the Psalms and the Holy Mass. In the December issue I want to invite you to meditate on the O-Antiphons, these ancient and beautiful liturgical acclamation of the Spotless Bride, the Church, as she awaits the coming of her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus.

I edited this using various sources, adding some of my own thoughts. This article is very long and is not intended to be read at once but rather in short sections over Advent. You may wish to read about the same O-Antiphon more than once, returning to it for 2-3 days, trying to explore - with the guidance of the Holy Spirit - what it tells you about Jesus Christ. Thus, slowly deepening our knowledge of Our Lord, our love and devotion for Him are bound to grow as well. Each O-Antiphon is linked to different Bible-verses. You may want to read those, going beyond the short quotes and exploring their wider context. There are also some suggestions - remember, prayer ideally involves all our senses! - and practical ideas about how to enrich our prayer life during Advent, how to use various symbols to remind us of Christ's coming into the world, into our soul, and at the end of the times.

Dec 17: O Wisdom, which comes forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end even to end, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: come to teach us the way of prudence.

In the Holy Scripture: Proverbs 1,20; 1 Corinthians 1,30; Sirach 24,3; Wisdom 8,1; Sirach 43,34, John 1,1-3, Colossians 1,16-17

Symbol: salt. You can place a small amount of salt in front of your cross/icon where you pray. Or keep some in a small sachet and have it with you all day long. As a reminder of Christ's presence. Think about how salt preserves, purifies, melts ice - how Christ, God's Wisdom, in a similar way preserves us for eternal life, purifies us from sin, melts away the ice of our cold hearts.

Think about how salt is easily forgotten about. How its presence is unseen, hidden - and yet it is everywhere, giving taste to otherwise bland food. Imagine how bland, how sad it would be to eat without salt. How joy would disappear from our meals. Similarly, Christ's presence is hidden, often sadly unnoticed even by his own - yet, try to imagine a world without Christ!! How every light, every joy, every "taste" would vanish without him.

Meditation:

Isaiah had prophesied: *"The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge*

and fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord.” (11,2-3), and “wonderful is His counsel and great is His wisdom.” (28,29).

Wisdom is here personified, present with God at the beginning of creation. This is a prefigurement of Jesus, the eternal Word of God, the “logos” St. John described in the opening of his gospel. Wisdom is the foundation of fear of the Lord, of holiness, or right living: it is wisdom whom we bid to come and teach us prudence. The cry “Come” will be repeated again and again, insistent and hope-filled.



Notice that the antiphon says that wisdom orders all things. This refers to the obvious fact that there is an order in all of creation. Things work together intricately on many levels. The microscopic level of atoms, molecules, and cells is the foundational matter of an amazing

interplay of delicately balanced realities that make possible complex systems of higher life and matter.

Our own bodies bespeak amazing organization in the interplay of the endocrine system, the nervous system, the lymphatic system, muscular and structural parts, and amazingly sophisticated organs such as the eyes and ears, not to mention the brain. All around us are ecosystems that both support and enable life. There is photosynthesis, amazing weather patterns, and further above us, the Van Allen belts magnetically deflecting the harmful rays of the sun while letting in the helpful ones. Add to this the beautiful balance of our solar system: the earth being just where it needs to be to permit enough warmth but not too much. Nearby, too, there are comet-catchers like Jupiter and Saturn in the asteroid belt keeping most of the asteroids at bay.

All of this magnificent interplay of systems, this balance and design, is what the wisdom tradition extols, and what the antiphon describes as coming forth from the mouth of God to order all things mightily and sweetly.

Be amazed by this wonderful, mightily ordered system - and imagine how infinitely more amazing, more beautiful that world-yet-to-come is which Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, has prepared for those who love him. That beautiful, amazing world not stained by sin, not dimmed by suffering or death.

Indeed, the book of Sirach, which announces the glory of God’s creation from 42,15 through 43,35, expressively says at its conclusion: “*Beyond these, many things lie hid; only a few of God’s works have we seen.*” (43,34)

This antiphon starts our immediate preparation for Christmas at the highest point. It proclaims the dogma of the divine Wisdom/Word. The first line of the verse describes Christ's eternal begetting before all things were made. The second and third lines describe the ministry of the Word in Creation. We see Christ-as-Wisdom encompassing all things, and governing the cosmos with strength and graciousness.

Is it perhaps not amazing to consider: our God is not only powerful, omnipotent, and wise but also playful and he delights in beauty and order. He loves creation, he enjoys creation!

The last line audaciously petitions this glorious being to teach us the "way of prudence." Prudence is not simply discretion or cautiousness; rather, it is the ability to govern according to reason. Prudence is the ground of all the virtues, the special gift of Wisdom. As in this creation everything has a love-governed purpose so must it be in our lives as well. All we do, all we say, all we think must be governed by love and wisdom. As we have been created into God's image it is our vocation, our duty, and our dignity to imitate the very Prototype whose image we are called to be.

What does it mean for us that Christ is the Wisdom/Word, in light of Christmas?

In the Old Testament scriptures, we see that God creates the world through his Wisdom. Genesis 1 shows a great ordering of chaotic matter, and with each day of creation the temple of the cosmos comes closer to completion. In the incarnation, this Divine Wisdom descends into the cosmic temple of its own fashioning, into the ark of Mary's womb. Through the immaculate temple of his body, Christ works the cleansing of the cosmic temple.

We therefore begin the final leg of our journey to Christmas with the truth of "*O Wisdom*" that the baby in Mary's womb is the Wisdom revealed in creation, from eternity, at all times and at all places. It is the Christ whose song, according to Clement of Alexandria, "composed the universe into melodious order, and tuned the discord of the elements to harmonious arrangement, so that the whole world might become harmony."

Dec 18: O Adonai, and leader of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush, and gave him the Law on Sinai: come to ransom us with outstretched arm.

In the Holy Scripture: Exodus 3,1-22; Exodus 6,6; Micah 5,2; Matthew 2,6; Isaiah 11,4-5; Isaiah 33,22; Exodus 20,18-20.

Symbol: something that “rules” our life. Good or bad. Diary with appointments, money (or an empty purse), phone, anything work related. Anything that makes or constrains or convinces us to do something.

Too often we are keen to put lords and rulers above ourselves. We are ready to do so many things - and let us now consider: what for? What promises, what gain, what good do we obtain from these our “lords” and “rulers”? Even the ones that give us something good - is it not a good that (one day) will perish?

Christ as Adonai, as “My Lord”, offers us goods that are truly good, riches that will never perish, life that will never end. But on the top of the “list” there is he himself: God. He gives us himself - and everything else.

If I show so much zeal, so much dedication, so much perseverance in following my little lords and rulers for perishable goods - how much more of these qualities should I show to my Lord and to my God?

Meditation: Isaiah had prophesied: “*But He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the lands afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.*” (11,4-5); and “*Indeed the Lord will be there with us, majestic; yes the Lord our judge, the Lord our lawgiver, the Lord our king, he it is who will save us.*” (33,22)

This antiphon speaks of Jesus as Lord and Ruler. We shall ponder him as ruler and king in another antiphon below. But here, note the description of the Lord particularly in the aspect of fire. The first aspect of fire is explicit, in the burning bush that Moses encountered. The second image is less explicit, speaking of Moses up on the mountain receiving the law. The great theophany on Sinai’s heights was described in a fiery sort of way in Exodus 20:18-20 as being almost like a volcano. There are clouds, fire, lightning, and trumpet blasts as Moses goes up on the mountain. The people below are terrified; they instinctively realise that they cannot even touch the base of the mountain because they are not worthy or holy enough to be in God’s fiery presence.

Scripture speaks of God as a consuming fire (Heb 12,29; Psalm 18), a holy fire, and, most productively for us, as a refining fire (Mal 3,2). As a refining fire, he shall burn away impurities so that we may one day be able to stand before him with hands raised up praising him who has redeemed us with strong hand and outstretched arm. It is no accident that the Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit enters us as fire to bring us up to the temperature of glory, burning away sinfulness, refining us as pure gold, enabling us to endure the blazing fire of God’s love.

We often expect God to be a fire - a purifying agent that burns away all the evil we see around us. But what about the evil that wants - and sometimes does - reside in our own hearts? Sin, hate, discontent, disaccord, judgements, impurity, greed... when these take over our heart and thoughts are we still happy for God to be a purifying fire?

“Adonai” is Hebrew for “my Lord”, and was substituted by devout Jews for the name "Yahweh", out of reverence. With this second antiphon we progress from creation to the familiar story of God manifesting himself by name to Moses and giving his law to Israel as their way of life. We are also reminded of the Israelites’ deliverance from bondage under Pharaoh - a foreshadowing of our own redemption from sin. The image of God’s arm outstretched in power to save his chosen people also brings to mind the later scene of Jesus with his arms outstretched for us on the Cross.

Christ showed his power and absolute lordship on the Cross: in weakness and humility. Am I ready to do the same? To allow myself to be weak and humble? When humiliated by others or overwhelmed/overcome by a number of things (evil or simply difficult) - do I look upon the Divine Arms outstretched on the Cross?

In this antiphon, Christ is addressed as God of Israel, the Old Testament Adonai himself. Like the previous antiphon, it depicts Christ in his divinity. Christ as Wisdom is manifest in all creation - now Christ as Lord (Adonai) is revealed in history. Christ-Adonai is the Son in the unity of the Godhead, but also the particular God of Israel, Shepherd of his people, Lord and Lawgiver. He is He-Who-Is, YHWH, and one whose “outstretched arm” is mighty to redeem. This antiphon celebrates the second stage of revelation, when the source of all being gave Israel his name in the burning bush, and the Law in a cloud of glory on Sinai.

God and his Law come together - do I accept it? Can my prayer be honest unless my effort to follow God’s law is honest too? Can I expect his saving might to come to my aid if I refuse his law - law that is there to guide, to preserve, and to save me? Can I believe in and proclaim a god that gives no law? A god that, through his law, would not even try to elevate, to sanctify, to save, to guide? Is a love for God, that does not also love his law, even real?

Christian tradition has seen the burning bush as a sign of the incarnation in several ways. First, Moses met the Son in the burning bush. The text indicates that “the angel of the Lord”—whom the Church Fathers almost universally identified as the Logos/Christ—was he who appeared in the flames. Second, the union of the living flame with the living bush was



thought to signify the union of divinity and humanity in Christ. Third, an ancient tradition that survives in both Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism affirms that the Burning Bush prefigures the Virgin Mary, on whom the divine light descended without causing her harm or loss of virginity.

God never takes away anything good from us. Offering and giving him all we have and all we are will not cause any loss, any harm, any diminution to us - on the contrary. Mary's *yes* made Mother of God, full of grace, Queen of

heaven and earth. Let us find the courage to give (back) to God everything we have, even ourselves!

Adonai came down on Sinai in lightning and smoke and thunder. The meeting of God and Moses produced stone tablets on which were written divine commandments, and Moses carried the Law down to Israel godlike in appearance. Around this time, possibly on Sinai, Moses asked for a more perfect vision of the glory of God. Nevertheless, he was permitted to see only the “back parts” of God, from a cleft in the rock. At the transfiguration of Christ on Tabor, God finally gave Moses the fullness of his original request: Moses saw the face of his Lord.

In Jesus we are given to see the face not of a great Teacher, not of a Prophet, not of a Wise man but God himself. There are so many fragments of truth and good in other religions or even in human philosophy - however, not one of them was given to see the face of the living God. Do I rejoice in being Christian? In having faith? In knowing God? In being part of the Church? In being invited to the Sacraments?

Christ does not come to us as a divine foreigner, but as our own God, who gave us the Law in the first place. He is fulfilling the promises of redemption he himself made. This is easily forgotten with the incarnation. We think of Adonai as the severe and just Father who sent his Son to die for us. But the truth is that the Son shares all the qualities of his Father. The Son was present in flames in the burning bush, and in the pillar of fire and cloud that led the Israelites through the wilderness. It was he whom Abraham welcomed, and he whom the prophets acclaimed. And it is he who, truly, has tabernacled among us in the flesh.

Fire, lightning, melting mountain and fire kept Israel away from God - all this is gone. The Incarnation happens in silence. It is an event so meek, so

tender, so peaceful that God almost seems weak. For my sake. That I have no more excuses to stay away but instead may boldly approach him.

Dec 19: O Root of Jesse, who stands as an ensign of the peoples, before whom kings will shut their mouths, whom the nations will entreat, come to free us, refuse now to be hindered.

In the Holy Scripture: Isaiah 11,10; Romans 15,12; Revelation 5,5; Isaiah 52,13-15; Isaiah 53,2; Luke 1,32-33; Micah 5,1.

Symbol: A family photo. There is such a deep connection between members of the same family. Not distance, not even death can undo it. Even those members of a family who are not around they are still with us through photos and memories.

God became part of a human family - the house of David - and we belong to God's family. By placing a family photo (album) in front of our cross/icon where we pray, we can come to realise more vividly: God became flesh. One of us. Part of our story, our memories, our family, our life. The unseen can now be seen and the invisible touched.

Meditation: Isaiah had prophesied: *“But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.”* (11,1) and: *“On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.”* (11,10). This antiphon stresses the historical roots of the Gospel in and among the Jewish people, whom God chose long ago to be the root, the vine, and eventually the very cradle of His saving love for all the nations. The root of Jesse here speaks of the Jewish people, of whom Jesus said and affirmed, *“Salvation is from the Jews”* (John 4,22).

Israel had been prepared for millennia to recognise and to accept the Messiah. While many Jewish people did, Israel as nation failed in that crucial moment of the history of salvation. Let me then think about my own readiness - all the graces, all the instruction, all the teaching I have received directly from God or through the Church, in prayer, through my parents, in form of words of advice, warning, or encouragement. How have I used them? God has been preparing my heart for the countless meetings with him. I meet him daily in the Sacrament, in prayer, in the poor and oppressed, in my neighbour, in his written Word. Do I recognise him? Do I rejoice in our meetings? Do I seek his face?

This antiphon shows us Jesus as part of Israel, part of the Jewish nation, part of David's house. It, then, speaks to family ties and history. The

Gospel is not located up in the skies; it is down-to-earth; it is among us by God's grace. He is from us in his human roots.

Is Church/church a family for me? Do I show the same genuine care, love, and appreciation to my "supernatural" family as I am due to my natural family? Are those worshipping around (with?) me my brethren? Am I to them?

What about church and "real life"? Are they connected? Am I a Christian for an hour on Sundays or 24/7? What is more "real" for me - the perishing world around or God's eternal Word and Wisdom?



Isaiah prophesied a restoration of David's throne: a new branch budding out of the old root. Christ is the root of Jesse in a two-fold sense: he is the descendant of David, who was the youngest son of Jesse, and he inherited the royal throne. The angel foretold to Mary, "*The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over the house of Jacob forever and his reign will be without end*" (Luke 1:32-33). Endless number of generations had cried out to God: "Come, save us, and do not delay" - and we, too, cry out time to time - and then Jesus came. Meek, poor, simple. Not exactly what Israel

expected. Sometimes even Jesus' own disciples were perplexed or scandalised.

What about me? When I pray for help and help comes in a different way than I expected... am I disappointed in God? Do I lack trust and faith when he is not showing his might and power? When unheard seems to go my endless prayers (for healing, for the conversion of my loved ones, for wounds to be healed and relations to be restores) ... do I still believe and hope and wait and persevere? Silently, humbly, trustingly?

This antiphon hails Christ as the Root of Jesse. This time, it is not Christ's divinity that is on display, but his messiahship. The great Wisdom of the Cosmos and Lord of Israel is shown as member and head of the royal house of David. The first line of this antiphon is drawn from Isaiah 11,10, the second from Isaiah 52,15. Isaiah 11 depicts the "root of Jesse" flowering again; the House of David, whose degraded descendants would lose the throne within two centuries, would produce an heir on whom rested the

Divine Spirit. This anointed king would rule with justice and turn Zion into a new Eden, and all the Gentiles would be drawn to him out of their own sin and desolation.

This title is an essentially human one, but not at odds with the previous portraits of his transcendent divinity. These successive antiphons embody the orthodox doctrine that Christ is wholly God and wholly Man. The Son, in assuming humanity, became a part of the same genetic House of David that he elected. Again, we see that the Son in the incarnation has come to inhabit the house he prepared through time. Millennia of longing for the divine were finally answered in a form that could be touched and seen.

We must also be struck by the immediacy of Christ and the power of his presence through the incarnation. He does not walk among us today as a mortal among mortals, but he is sacramentally present to us in the Eucharist, and to the world in his body, the Church. This is his kingdom, which will one day envelop the world. Isaiah prophesied of this when he described a new Sion, a light to the nations. The House of David is fulfilled in Christ in flesh; he overshadows David and Hezekiah and all the kings of all nations on earth. To the God-man has been given all authority; he has set up his throne on his holy mountain in the Church, and the world is drawn by his glory. One day all shall recognize him as Lord.

Let me then meditate on the great and amazing wonder of the Eucharist: do I appreciate this incredible Gift? Do I love and seek the presence of my Eucharistic Lord? Is Mass and worship a moment of joy and exultation? Do I return home refreshed, renewed, reinvigorated?

And as for the kinship and kingdom of Jesus - what is my "contribution"? When people see my life, my choices, when they hear my words... do they glorify the Father? Are my words, my thoughts, my acts, my life precious gems or shameful stains on Christ's crown and royal robe?

Dec 20: O Key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel; who opens, and no one closes; who closes, and no one opens: come, and lead the fettered ones out from the prison-house, those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

In the Holy Scripture: Isaiah 22,22; Genesis 3,24; Revelation 3,7; Isaiah 42,6-7; Matthew 4,16; Hebrews 2,14-15.

Symbol: a key. If we have one then a big, old-fashioned key we can carry with us for a couple of days to remind ourselves of this antiphon.

Meditation: Isaiah had prophesied: “*I will place the Key of the House of David on His shoulder; when he opens, no one will shut, when he shuts, no one will open.*” (22,22), and “*His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from Davids throne, and over His kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever.*” (9,6)

While Adam and Eve experienced their exclusion from Eden as punishment, it was also for their own good. After that first sin, they/we could no longer endure the presence of God... so we were mercifully excluded from the garden, now guarded by an angel with the flaming sword. We could not, on our own, ever hope to regain access to the Father. Coming into God’s presence in that sinful state would have meant certain death for us. As gazing into the sun kills the sight of human eye, so looking up on God means death for mortal, sinful creatures. There was no way for us, in our sinful state, to tolerate the holiness of God.

This is why the prophet Malachi memorably asked: “*But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appears?*” (3,3). Malachi went on to answer that only when God acted as a refining fire could we be pure enough to endure or abide His presence. And this Jesus did for us on the cross, purifying us with His own blood, with the fire of His love.

Therefore, it is Jesus who holds the key to open so that no one can close, to close so that no one can open (Rev 3,7). He alone restores us access to His Father. He opens the gates, not of some earthly paradise, but of Heaven itself.

A key bespeaks access, and the one who holds the keys has the power to give or refuse admittance. Both the keys and the mention of His sceptre are reminders of Jesus’ authority. One day we will stand before Him who will judge us. He alone will grant access, opening so that no one can shut. He alone will deny access to those unfit and incapable of the kingdom, closing so that no one can open.

The key and sceptre are traditional symbols of kingly power and authority too. Christ, the Anointed one, is the heir of David and possessor of the kingdom. All power and authority was given to him after the resurrection, and he entrusted this power to “bind and to loose” to Peter and the ministers of his church. In the closing petition we look to Jesus to unlock the fetters of sin that keeps us tightly chained. It is he who frees us from our captivity. We recall the deliverance proclaimed by the psalmist of old: “*they dwelt in darkness and gloom, bondsmen in want and in chains,...and he led them forth from darkness and gloom and broke their bonds asunder.*” (Ps 107,10.14)

By creating a link, through the image of a key, between Christ's kingly power and the ministry of the Church, and through the words of Isaiah (the key lies on Christ's shoulder), we start to understand that it is through the forgiveness of sins that we are brought out of the prison of death and endless darkness. This forgiveness of sin has been obtained by Christ (who accepted the cross being placed on his shoulder) but now it is administered by those to whom Christ entrusted the keys: the Church. Indeed, the language of the key, to any early Christian, clearly points to the authority of Christ, in and by whom the Church has power to govern its members.

Advent is a good time for me to reconsider my relationship (often, alas, non-existent) with the Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation. A small, simple key can open up enormous bronze gates, can give access to infinite treasures, can make safe places accessible. In the same way, Confession, this Sacrament of shocking simplicity, is a key that opens the shut doors of Eden, unlocks the gate of my imprisonment in sin and death, gives access to the infinite treasures of God's grace.

This antiphon also draws a line to Christ's role as liberator. In Revelation 1,18 the victorious Son holds "the keys of Death and Hades," having worked the destruction of the fiend whose is the power of death (Hebrews 2,14-15). We cannot forget this aspect of Christ's advent, lest we see our Lord as a kind of arbitrary despot, opening the door for some and closing it for others by terrible decree. We see that Christ has received authority from the Father not for the sake of drawing a line between good people and bad people, but for the heroic purpose of invading the prison of death and robbing the devil of his captives. This is why the child in the manger descended to earth, and it is why he descended further into Hell. He carries a secret weapon against the reign of darkness in the world, one that will invert the order of death and reverse its effects. This antiphon celebrates Christ's mission to free death's captives. The Christ who entered a mortal womb would one day go down into the very heart of death and trample it down.

(To be continued...in December 2022!)



Vicar

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The Vicar's day-off is Monday. In case of pastoral emergency, please, try to contact the Assistant Priests, or the Parish Office first.

With enquires about Baptisms, Weddings, Banns, or Funerals, please, contact the Vicar.

Assistant Priests

Fr Tony Ball - tonyball2008@hotmail.co.uk - 07899 027710
Fr Bruce Dixon - bandk2d@hotmail.com - 07535 014239

Churchwardens

Anne Mullis - annemullis566@btinternet.com - 07821 199823
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Parish Office

You can contact the Parish Office by email (stpweymouth@gmail.com) or on 771217 (leave a message with your name and number). Since nobody works in the Parish Office currently, messages are not checked daily. If your enquiry is urgent, please contact the Vicar or the Churchwardens directly.

Treasurer

Katherine Harrison - 01305 771217

S.P.O.T.

Pat Perry - 01305 750951

*With enquires about **hiring the Parish Hall, joining the Munch Club or the Choir**, please, contact the Parish Office.*

A priest is always available for Confession, spiritual direction, or for a simple chat half an hour before every Service, or at any other time by appointment!