



HIGH TIDE

December 2022

PARISH MAGAZINE
SAINT PAUL'S, WEYMOUTH



This Magazine contains: *Letter from the Vicar - articles from Jeanne James & Beth Bentley - Advent & Christmas articles - and more*

You can detach pages 17-28 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.

*The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 1st January**. Please, send all articles, information, news you wish to be published by Sunday 25th December.*

Front cover image: “Adoration of the Christ Child”
by Gerard Honthorst (ca. 1620); Uffizi (Florence)

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

Prayer and the sacraments, fasting and almsgiving are the only foundation of any authentic Christian life. They draw us closer to God, mitigate our unordered self-love, and open our hearts to our neighbour. For this reason, they should be constantly present in our life.

However, there are special times in the liturgical year of the Church when these instruments of salvation—because that is exactly what they are!—should be used with even greater fervour by each one of us. These special times are the holy seasons of Advent and Lent. Both of them are days of preparation for the greatest mystery of our faith: God's inconceivable desire to be with us. For some reason He cannot have enough of us... and His only wish is that we feel the same about Him. This desire shines through the Church's liturgy during these days: in the prayers of the Mass, in the Psalms of Morning and Evening Prayer, in the prophecies we read, and in the hymns we sing. Even if it is not (yet) part of your Christian life, I earnestly encourage you to come to Mass during the week more frequently during Advent—if for no other reason, at least for the sweetness and delight the prayers and readings of Advent-days offer.

In February 1970, as the Parish (and the whole Church, of course) was preparing for Lent, Fr. Vernon Thomas, then Vicar of St. Paul's, wrote in the Parish Magazine: *“The Catechism teaches us that we have three enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, but for a good deal of our lives we are inclined to treat them as our closest friends. In the same way prayer, fasting and almsgiving are in fact the surest road to heaven while in fact we find them some of the hardest things to perform. With the extra services [of this season] opportunities for prayer are multiplied. Please do not despise fasting. Our Lord did not.”*

Advent, of course, is not Lent; this holy season is somewhat more gentle and sweet—but our enemies are at work against us the same and so our answer must be the same as in Lent: prayer, sacraments, fasting, and almsgiving. If we practise these things for Christ's sake then, as Fr. Vernon Thomas wrote, *“no doubt that he will bless both our efforts and us.”*

With this encouragement—and the promises it contains—I wish you a holy and fruitful preparation during Advent so that at Christmas your hearts—by then enlarged, adorned, and well prepared—may be filled to the brim with the love and light, peace and joy of our Eternal Newborn King!

Merry Christmas to you all and to your loved ones!

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

Fr. Gregory

Thank-you notes



Thank you very much to all our knitters and crocheters who made our Remembrance Poppies this year, and helped put it together. Also to Tony for our soldier. It was a truly fitting reminder of lives lost in wars. Many people have remarked how much it portrayed what we were trying to achieve. Thank you.
Anne Mullis

A huge thank you to Beechcroft St. Paul's children for their amazing contribution to Warm Welcome. It made a huge difference to those in need.
The Warm Welcome Team



Christmas services

<i>Saturday, 17 December</i>	<i>5pm</i>	<i>Carol Service (St. Paul's)</i>
<i>Sunday, 18 December</i>	<i>5pm</i>	<i>Carol Service (Fleet)</i>
<i>Saturday, 24 December</i>	<i>4pm</i>	<i>Crib Service for Families</i>
<i>Saturday, 24 December</i>	<i>11.30pm</i>	<i>Midnight Mass</i>
<i>Sunday, 25 December</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>Mass of the Shepherds</i>
<i>Sunday, 25 December</i>	<i>10.30am</i>	<i>Mass of Christmas Day</i>
<i>Saturday, 31 December</i>	<i>5pm-7pm</i>	<i>Eucharistic Adoration & silent prayers for a peaceful 2024</i>

All are welcome to join us!

The holy season of Advent

The first mention of the Advent season as a time of preparation for Christmas dates back to the beginning of the 5th century in Rome. The next mention of Advent is from 582 when a council held in France ordered that *festive* Christmas preparations should begin on the Sunday following St. Martin's Day and should last six Sundays. Eight years later, Pope Gregory shortened the period to four Sundays. Advent was given its final form around the 8th century. In the 14th century, *Lenten* rules were introduced.

As you can see, Advent is an ancient time of preparation with a unique tone: a strange mix of joy and penance. On the one hand, Christmas trees are everywhere, most kitchens smell of mince pie, shopping is happening at full speed... but the Church also reminds us in this time of the need of penitence. It is a contrite heart, as the Scripture says, that pleases God the most; it is there where he takes his dwelling place. So for four weeks Christmas lights and penitential purple coexist.

While Advent should be a time of increased prayer, confession, some fasting, and the reading of the Scripture (especially the prophets), there are so many other ways to make these four weeks meaning- and fruitful. The following articles will hopefully help with exactly this: to shape your own Advent preparation so that when Christmas arrives, not only your home but your heart, too, is well prepared for the Lord Jesus.

How to read the Bible verses

Some may struggle to “decipher” Bible references. The basic pattern is **the name of the Book, the chapter number followed by a colon or comma, and the verse number**. For example Genesis 1:3 (*or* Genesis 1,3) refers to the book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 3.

Consecutive verses are indicated by “-“. For example: Genesis 5,8-13 refers to verses 8 through 13 in chapter 5. A selection of verses is separated by “:” For example: Genesis 7,2,5,27 refers to verses 2 and 5 and 27 in chapter 7 (skipping the verses between them). If verses are not indicated, then the whole chapter is meant. For example: Genesis 27 refers to all verses in chapter 27. Sometimes a reading starts in one chapter and finishes in another. For example: Genesis 3,4 - 4,8 refers to verses starting with verse 4 in chapter 3 all through verse 8 in chapter 4. Finally, there are a few books with the same name. To distinguish between them, a number is placed *before* the name of the book. For example: 2 Peter 2,3-7 refers to verses 3 through 7 in chapter 2 in the *second* letter of Peter.

Roly Poly Mince Pies

from Jeanne James' kitchen:

Time: 20 mins plus 30 mins chilling and 30 mins in the oven. Makes 12 rounds.

Ingredients:

50g/2oz golden caster sugar
375g pack of ready rolled puff pastry
411g jar of traditional mincemeat
1 tbsp milk
25g/1oz of flaked almonds

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas mark 5

STEP 1 - Scatter the sugar over the worktop, unroll the pastry and place it on top of the sugar, then roll it out so it is a quarter bigger but keeps its rectangular shape. Spoon and spread the mincemeat evenly over the pastry leaving a 2cm or 3 quarters of an inch border along the longest edges. Fold one of the longest edges over the mincemeat then roll the pastry tightly into a sausage shape while gently pressing the pastry into the mincemeat.

STEP 2 - When you get to the other edge, brush it with milk and press down to seal in the mincemeat. Press both ends in gently to plump up the roll and chill for at least 30 mins to firm. Once chilled cut the roll into 12 rounds about 3cm or 1 and a quarter inch thick.



STEP 3 - Lay them evenly on a large baking sheet and flatten them with your hand so they look like squashed Chelsea buns. Scatter the almonds on top and bake for 20-30 mins until golden brown and the mincemeat sizzles. Leave to cool for 5 mins. Keep them separate so they don't stick together. Eat hot with vanilla ice-cream, or just as they are.

Unbelievably easy mince pies

from Jeanne James' kitchen:

Time: 30 mins prep and 20 mins in the oven. Makes 12 pies.

Ingredients:

225g cold butter, diced
350g plain flour
100g golden caster sugar
280g mincemeat
1 small egg, beaten
Icing sugar, to dust

Instructions:

STEP 1 - To make the pastry, rub the butter into the flour, then mix in the sugar and a pinch of salt. Combine the pastry into a ball (don't add liquid) and knead it briefly. The dough will be fairly firm, like shortbread dough. You can use the dough immediately or chill for later. (If the dough really will not bind together, go on then, add a tablespoon of water).

STEP 2 - Preheat the oven to 200C/Gas 6/Fan 180C. Grease with butter a deep patty tin and press walnut sized balls of pastry into each hole. Spoon the mincemeat into the pies.

STEP 3 - Take slightly smaller balls of pastry than before and pat them out between your hands to make round lids, big enough to cover the pies. Top the pies with their lids, pressing the edges gently together to seal. (You don't need to seal them with milk or egg as they will stick on their own.)

STEP 4 - Brush the tops of the pies with beaten egg. Bake for 20 mins until golden. Leave to cool in the tin for 5 mins, then remove to a wire rack. To serve lightly dust with icing sugar. They will keep for 3 or 4 days in an airtight container.



The necessity of ritual and ceremony in the modern world

by Fr. Nicholas Fleming

With the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the long-awaited assent of her son to become King Charles III, England has become the focus, once again, of great pageantry and palace intrigue. There is much to be said for the pomp and circumstance, the great processions of the royal guard, and the great solemnity with which it all takes place; it is a kingdom, after all.

Those familiar with high-church worship might remember with more or less enthusiasm the pageantry surrounding our sacred rites. The incense, the long processions, harmonious choir, and throngs of people dressed in their Sunday best, including the “palace intrigue” surrounding the secretive movements around the altar, all demonstrate the high solemnity of the sacred mysteries; it is a heavenly banquet, after all.

But, much like seas of change surrounding and following Vatican II, some have called for simplifying the ceremonials with the rise of a new monarch. Believing that these services are now antiquated or archaic, they hope that King Charles III might welcome some change and modernization.

With the world in a media frenzy and our daily lives lived through fiberoptic cables and satellite signals at the touch of a button or click of the mouse, some wonder if all this gallant spectacle should remain a thing of the past. Modernization seems to take no prisoners in its desire to cast off the yoke of tradition.

There are others, though, who argue that traditions are more necessary now than ever, if only to remind one of the grandeur of reality. They argue that in a world that often lives vicariously through media apps, nothing is more necessary than the reality of community life, compatriots lining the streets for leaders who have been for centuries sources of unity, stability, and even strength. They insist that the grandeur of a kingdom should not be overrun by the need—nay, the desire—to move “forward” to a more simple aesthetic. Kingdoms are societies and there is nothing more charming or real for the citizenry to feel a member of that society than to line up to see their sovereign pass them by with a palace wave with all the courtiers behind.

The question here might be stated thus: What would be lost if we rid ourselves of the pomp and solemnity of this moment? Moreover, what would we lose if we dispensed with it?

I would think a great deal in both. Of course, it should be self-evident that every society has its issues that need to be addressed; no organizations bare without its sin, but their place in society holds value, even with their

flaws and scars. Notwithstanding the imperfections of any institution, minimizing them through simplification would mean that society as a whole would lose the grandeur of man's united efforts, and each person would lose their sense of belonging to something grand and majestic. Society would lose the majesty formed by unity, and man would further lose his heritage. For a simple demonstration, one need look only to the Church in chaos to see how simplification, accommodation, and a lack of serious solemnity have harmed her unity and even moral sovereignty.

Kingdoms, however imperfect they may be, should have the look and feel of royalty, for royalty in all of its grandeur elicits respect. The passerby stops in awe when the King's Court passes, and he should. It is moving, even astounding, to watch order in the midst of chaos, people dressed in the most regal uniforms to mark the most important occasions, the sights and sounds which offer those in attendance the full measure and weight of any crown.

But it doesn't simply end in spectacle. For the countrymen, the citizens of the royal crown in England share a common head, and with the spectacle find themselves reminded of their common heritage, their familial bonds which have united them all, kingdoms past and present. The monarchy, with its lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, princes and princesses, puts forward the simple truth that they are one people, one nation, under a single king: this is their kingdom, their royalty, and the glory of their people on display. Participation unites them in deeper bonds of unity than could ever be manifest from the comforts of their living rooms hovering around a TV. The world watched, yes, but those present participated.



The same can be said for liturgy. We are our rites, but we also must experience the full breadth of grandeur in the crown with our ceremonials, which can only be experienced in full when present in person. All of the customs and rituals bespeak the true nature of our heritage, one that was given us by the King of Kings, our

Saviour, Christ Jesus. St. Paul says as much in his letter to the Romans: *“The Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God. But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ...”* (Rom 8,16-17).

Perhaps the change in Monarch in England might cause reflection on our own heavenly heritage and the manner in which it is celebrated.

(Article written for and published in Catholic World Report, 23/9/2022.)

Traditions for Advent and Christmas

by Michaelann Martin

The Church has designated the four weeks preceding Christmas as Advent, a time to prepare the way of the Lord for His coming as our King and Saviour. Either we live the liturgical year with its varying seasons of joy and sorrow, work and rest, or we follow the pattern of the world, writes Helen McLoughlin in *Advent and Christmas in a Catholic Home*, commenting on the challenge Christians have of being in the world but not of the world throughout the year. She wrote these profound words in the 1950s, but they are even more important today because of the general decline in Christian family life during the last 40 years. With two parents working in many households, there is less time to devote to the spiritual life of the family. We must readjust our priorities and teach our children by living our faith, both inside and outside the home.

Children love to anticipate, writes McLoughlin. When there are empty mangers to fill with straw for small sacrifices, when the Mary candle is a daily reminder on the dinner table, when Advent hymns are sung in the candlelight of a graceful Advent wreath, children are not anxious to celebrate Christmas before time. Older children who make Nativity sets, cut Old Testament symbols to decorate a Jesse tree, or prepare costumes for a Christmas play will find Advent all too short a time to prepare for the coming of Christ the King.

These are hopeful thoughts as we prepare to incorporate some of these liturgical activities into our home life during Advent to enable us to truly celebrate Christmas. It is a shame that many do not fast during Advent, because without a fast there can really be no feast at Christmas. Fasting and other forms of penance, such as prayer and almsgiving, help to purify our hearts and prepare us for the celebration of Christmas. The Church especially encourages participation at weekday Masses during Advent, because in the Eucharist we find the source and goal of our preparation: Christ Himself.

The Church primarily celebrates Christmas from Christmas Day until Epiphany, the manifestation of Christ as the Saviour of the whole world (cf. Mt 2,1-12). The Church has also traditionally celebrated Christmas for 40 days, culminating on the Feast of the Presentation (Feb. 2). During this time, the birth of Christ is celebrated as one continuous festival. It is just as important to celebrate during the Christmas season as it is to prepare for Christ during Advent.

A family that participates together in Mass and other activities during the Advent and Christmas seasons will grow closer in Christ, the Reason for the Season, and give a great witness to friends and relatives. The following

activities are provided so that you and your family can live Advent and Christmas to the fullest.

Advent wreath: The Advent wreath, which has German origins, is probably the most recognized Advent custom. It is a wreath made of evergreens that is bound to a circle of wire. It symbolizes the many years from Adam to Christ in which the world awaited its Redeemer; it also represents the years that we have awaited His second and final coming. The wreath holds four (sometimes five) equally spaced candles, the three purple ones lit on the penitential Sundays and a pink one for Gaudete, the joyful third Sunday in Advent. There are many prayers and hymns that can accompany your personal Advent wreath ceremony.

The empty manger: Each child may have his own individual manger, or there may be one manger for the whole family. The idea is that when acts of service, sacrifice, or kindness are done in honour of Baby Jesus as a birthday present, the child receives a piece of straw to put into the manger. Then, on Christmas morning, Baby Jesus is placed in the manger. Encourage your children to make Jesus' bed as comfortable as possible through their good deeds. In the process, explain Christ's incomparable self-gift at Christmas and Easter that enables us to be part of God's family.

The Jesse tree: The Jesse tree tells about Christ's ancestry through symbols and relates Scripture to salvation history, progressing from creation to the birth of Christ. The tree can be made on a poster board with the symbols glued on, or on an actual tree. *(There is an article on the Jesse Tree in the 2021 December High Tide which you can find on the parish website.)*

St. Nicholas' Day: The feast of St. Nicholas is on 6 December. It is a highlight of the Advent season. Each child puts out a shoe the night before the day in the hope that the kind bishop with his miter, staff, and bag of gifts will pay a visit. The current Santa Claus is modelled after St. Nicholas but commercialism has tarnished the true story. Many families give gifts on both 6 December and Christmas. It can be a starting point to explain how generously God rewards the good we do with his help.

The Christ candle: Any large white candle can be used for the Christ candle. The idea is to decorate it with symbols for Christ. Use old Christmas cards, sequins, holly, etc. The candle can be lit on Christmas Eve to show that the Light of the World has arrived. Then continue to light the Christ candle throughout the year at Sunday dinner to remind your family of our waiting for Christ, as well as celebrating His birth and Resurrection. Accompanied by

a prayer card, it could be a meaningful, lovely gift to those members of our family who do not attend church... bringing church to them, in a sense.

The Mary candle: Some families have the custom of decorating the Christ candle with a blue veil on 8 December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On this great feast, others place a candle with a blue ribbon before a statue or picture of the Blessed Virgin, whose *yes* to God enabled our Lord's coming at Christmas. The candle is lit during meal times to serve as a delightful reminder of Mary's eager expectation of the Light of the World. It can also serve as a reminder to each family member to keep their own light of grace burning as a preparation for Christ's coming.

St. Lucy cakes: The feast of St. Lucy, virgin and martyr, is on 13 December. This marks the opening of the Christmas season in Sweden. Her life story can be found in most saints' books, as can the recipe for the traditional cakes. The symbolism is rich and her life story worthwhile reading. *(Remember, our parish website has a Calendar with the life of the Saints.)*

The Nativity scene: This is the event in which the entire family shares setting up the Christmas manger. Mary and Joseph should be far off traveling and their approach to Bethlehem can be adjusted daily. Older children can make life-size Nativity models, carve them, cut them out from cardboard, or set up pre-made figurines. The creative ideas are without limit. Make sure to place the Nativity scene where many can admire the children's efforts to give God glory. Setting up a beautiful Nativity scene in your house where visitors (family, friends, neighbours) can see it could create a good occasion to talk about the story of Jesus.

Blessing of the tree: More and more frequently families are blessing their Christmas trees. It is good to remind children that the tree relates to many aspects of our faith. For example, we are reminded that our first parents were not allowed to eat from one tree, and that Christ paid the great price for our redemption by hanging on a tree. There are many different stories which attempt to explain why we use a tree at Christmas. For instance, St. Boniface in the eighth century gave the balsam fir tree to the Druids in place of the oak tree, the symbol of their idol. He said, The fir tree is the wood of peace, the sign of an endless life with its evergreen branches. It points to heaven. It will never shelter deeds of blood, but rather be filled with loving gifts and rites of kindness.

(Originally written for and published in Catholic Traditions for Advent and Christmas; Lay Witness; December 1998)

Blessing and lighting of the Advent Wreath at home

You can have an Advent wreath at home, either with 4 or with 5 candles. If you do not have purple and pink candles, you can use white candles with purple and pink ribbons on them. The first candle is lit on Advent Sunday (or Saturday evening); additional ones are lit, one on each Sunday (or Saturday evening). You may use this simple Liturgy:

Week one

V. May our hearts be filled with hope as we hear the promises God made to bless all the peoples on earth through Abraham, the father of our faith.

V. A reading from the Book of Genesis: *“Meanwhile, the Lord said to Abram, Leave thy country behind thee, thy kinsfolk, and thy father’s home, and come away into a land I will shew thee. Then I will make a great people of thee; I will bless thee, and make thy name renowned, a name of benediction; those who bless thee, I will bless, those who curse thee, I will curse, and in thee all the races of the world shall find a blessing.”* This is the word of the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God.

V. Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. **R.** Blessed be God for ever.

The first candle is lit.

V. Let us pray. Almighty God, we give thanks for our father Abraham who by faith obeyed your call and became the father of many nations. Give us faith to listen to your voice that our hearts may be filled with the hope of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. **R.** Amen.

Week two

The first candle is lit at the beginning. **V.** May our hearts be filled with peace as we hear the words of the prophet Isaiah who told of Him who would be born the Prince of Peace.

V. A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: *“For our sakes a child is born, to our race a son is given, whose shoulder will bear the sceptre of princely power. What name shall be given him? Peerless among counsellors, the mighty God, Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace. Ever wider shall his dominion spread, endlessly at peace; he*

will sit on David's kingly throne, to give it lasting foundations of justice and right; so tenderly he loves us, the Lord of hosts." This is the word of the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God.

V. Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. **R.** Blessed be God for ever.

The second candle is lit.

R. Let us pray. Lord God you spoke through your prophets and promised a kingdom of peace. We welcome your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Make our hearts long for the establishment of his kingdom of justice and righteousness. **R.** Amen.

Week three

The first two candles are lit at the beginning. **V.** May our hearts be filled with God's love towards all people as we consider the life of sacrifice and encouragement of Saint John the Baptist.

V. A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew: "*In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea; Repent, he said, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It was of him that the prophet Isaiah spoke, when he said, There is a voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, straighten out his paths.*" This is the word of the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God.

V. Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet Saint John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus Christ our Saviour, and King of the ages. **R.** Blessed be God for ever.

The third (rose) candle is lit.

R. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, your servant Saint John the Baptist called people to prepare for your coming by caring for one another. Give us willing hearts to reach out to all people in need with your love and compassion. **R.** Amen.

Week four

The first three candles are lit at the beginning. **V.** May our hearts be filled with joy as we hear the song of Mary, the Blessed Mother of Jesus.

V. A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke: “*And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit has found joy in God, who is my Saviour, because he has looked graciously upon the lowliness of his handmaid. Behold, from this day forward all generations will count me blessed; because he who is mighty, he whose name is holy, has wrought for me his wonders. He has mercy upon those who fear him, from generation to generation; he has done valiantly with the strength of his arm, driving the proud astray in the conceit of their hearts; he has put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty-handed. He has protected his servant Israel, keeping his merciful design in remembrance, according to the promise which he made to our forefathers, Abraham and his posterity for evermore.*” This is the word of the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God.

V. Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of the blessed, ever-virgin Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Saviour of all. **R.** Blessed be God for ever.

The fourth candle is lit.

R. Let us pray. Almighty God, you decided to take up our frail nature in the womb of Mary, virgin and mother most pure. Through her prayers and protection, preserve us from all evil and harm, now and for ever. **R.** Amen.

If you have an Advent wreath with five candles:

On Christmas morning

The first four candles are lit at the beginning. **V.** This day the Christ is born: this day the Saviour is appeared; this day the Angels sing praise in the earth and the Archangels rejoice. May then our hearts be filled with joy and peace.

V. A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke: “*Mary brought forth a son, her first-born, whom she wrapped in his swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. In the same country there were shepherds awake in the fields, keeping night-watches over their flocks. And all at once an angel of the Lord came and stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone about them, so that they were overcome with fear. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; behold, I bring you*

good news of a great rejoicing for the whole people. This day, in the city of David, a Saviour has been born for you, the Lord Christ himself. This is the sign by which you are to know him; you will find a child still in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. Then, on a sudden, a multitude of the heavenly army appeared to them at the angel's side, giving praise to God, and saying, Glory to God in high heaven, and peace on earth to men that are God's friends." This is the word of the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God.

V. Blessed are you, God our Father, for today the Saviour is born and those who live in darkness are seeing a great light. Help us, who greet the birth of Christ with joy, to live in the light of your Son and to share the good news of your love. **R.** Blessed be God for ever.

The fifth (white central) candle is lit.

R. Let us pray. Holy God, you left the glory of heaven to take upon yourself our fragile humanity. You came to us in love and yet we denied you room and you were laid in a manger. We have lit candles of hope, peace, love and joy; may these virtues shine brightly in our lives as we welcome you into our hearts this Christmas. **R.** Amen.

Before using it, you can bring your Advent wreath to church and ask the priest to bless it. Or you can bless it yourself at home with one of the following prayers:

In the short days and long nights of Advent, we realize how we are always needing salvation by our God. Around this wreath, we shall remember God's promise. *(A moment of silence is kept.)* O God, by whose Word all things are sanctified, pour forth Your blessing upon this wreath and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from You abundant graces. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord our God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, he is the Saviour of every nation. Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Anniversaries of death

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

Calendar for December 2022

THU	1 st	<i>Feria</i>	6pm
FRI	2 nd	St. Bibiana, Virgin & Martyr	12pm
SAT	3 rd	St. Francis Xavier	9.30am
SUN	4 th	2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT	10.30am, 4pm
MON	5 th	St. Birinus, Bishop	9am
TUE	6 th	St. Nicholas, Bishop	9am
WED	7 th	St. Ambrose, Bishop	10am
THU	8 th	IMMACULATE CONCEPTION	6pm
FRI	9 th	<u><i>Monthly Requiem</i></u>	12pm
SAT	10 th	<i>Of Our Lady</i>	9.30am
SUN	11 th	3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT	10.30am, 4pm
MON	12 th	<i>Feria</i>	9am
TUE	13 th	St. Lucy, Virgin & Martyr	9am
WED	14 th	<i>Feria (Ember Day)</i>	10am
THU	15 th	<i>Feria</i>	6pm
FRI	16 th	<u><i>Anointing - Novena - (Ember Day)</i></u>	12pm
SAT	17 th	<i>Feria - Novena - (Ember Day)</i>	9.30am
SUN	18 th	4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - Novena	10.30am, 5pm
MON	19 th	<i>Feria - Novena</i>	9am
TUE	20 th	<i>Vigil - Novena</i>	9am
WED	21 st	ST. THOMAS APOSTLE - <i>Novena</i>	10am
THU	22 nd	<i>Feria - Novena</i>	6pm
FRI	23 rd	<i>Feria - Novena</i>	12pm
SAT	24 th	VIGIL - Novena	9.30am, 11.30pm
SUN	25 th	NATIVITY OF OUR LORD	10.30am
MON	26 th	ST. STEPHEN DEACON, PROTOMARTYR	10am
TUE	27 th	ST. JOHN APOSTLE & EVANGELIST	10am
WED	28 th	HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS	10am
THU	29 th	ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY	6pm
FRI	30 th	<i>6th day within the Octave of Christmas</i>	12pm
SAT	31 st	St. Sylvester I, Pope	9.30am

*We pray for...*

- 1st Priests & vocations - *Frances Geroghty, Ted Marshall, Sbeila Smallman*
- 2nd Dying - *Max Williams pr., Olive Ames*
- 3rd Shrine of Walsingham - *Blessie May Martin, Robert Keat*
- 4th Our Parish - *Sam Eades*
- 5th Our Congregation
- 6th Children living in poverty - *Trixie Babb*
- 7th Chapter of St. Aldhelm: our Servers - *Ben Bowring*
- 8th Greater devotion to Our Lady
- 9th Departed - *Shaun Tolman, Brian Smart*
- 10th Cell of O.L.W. - *Herbert Rod, Olivia Harding*
- 11th Our Parish. - *Alex*
- 12th Strong hope and faith
- 13th Homeless & destitute - *Kay Berriman*
- 14th Every conceived but endangered human life - *John Seymour*
- 15th Conversion of sinners - *Ethel Teece*
- 16th Sick - *Mo Palmer*
- 17th Those suffering from depression or addictions
- 18th Our Parish - *Edith Sibley, Michael Houghton bp.*
- 19th A spirit of penitence - *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, Ramona Yates, Josephine (Jo) Farn*
- 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 2023 - *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. Today 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. 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. Today 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. 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. Today 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. 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. Amen.

From Christmas: a suitable Christmas Carol may be used.

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

1	Psalm(s) 42	Isaiah 44,1-8 Revelation 21,9-21	3	9	Isaiah 45,1-13 Revelation 22
2	25	Isaiah 44,9-23 Revelation 21,22-end	4	80	Amos 7 Luke 1,5-20

5	56	Isaiah 45,14-end 1 Thessalonians 1	19	146	Isaiah 53 2 Peter 1,1-15
6	62	Isaiah 46 1 Thessalonians 2,1-12	20	46	Isaiah 54 2 Peter 1,16-end
7	63	Isaiah 47 1 Thessalonians 2,13-end	21	121, 122	Isaiah 55 2 Peter 2
8	45 v. 10-17	Genesis 3,1-5 Luke 1,26-28	22	124, 125 126, 127	Isaiah 56,1-8 2 Peter 3
9	86	Isaiah 48,12-end 1 Thessalonians 4,1-12	23	129 130, 131	Isaiah 63,1-6 2 John
10	145	Isaiah 49,1-13 1 Thessalonians 4,13-end	24	45	Isaiah 58 3 John
11	68 v. 1-19	Zephaniah 3,14-end Philippians 4,4-7	25	110, 117	Isaiah 62,1-5 Matthew 1,18-end
12	40	Isaiah 49,14-25 1 Thessalonians 5,1-11	26	13, 150	Jeremiah 26,12-15 Acts 6
13	70, 74	Isaiah 50 1 Thessalonians 5,12-end	27	21	Exodus 33,12-end 1 John 2,1-11
14	75, 96	Isaiah 51,1-8 2 Thessalonians 1	28	36	Baruch 4,21-27 Matthew 18,1-10
15	76, 97	Isaiah 51,9-16 2 Thessalonians 2	29	19, 20	Isaiah 57,15-end John 1,1-18
16	77, 98	Isaiah 51,17-end 2 Thessalonians 3	30	111, 112, 113	Isaiah 59,1-15 John 1,19-28
17	71	Isaiah 52,1-12 Jude	31	102	Isaiah 59,16-end John 1,29-34
18	144	Micah 5,2-5 Luke 1,26-38			

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 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.

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.

From Christmas: a suitable Christmas Carol may be used.

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

1	Psalm 16	Isaiah 28,14-end Matthew 13,1-23	17	43	Zephaniah 3,14-end Matthew 18,21-end
2	17	Isaiah 29,1-14 Matthew 13,24-43	18	113 <i>or</i> 126	1 Samuel 1,1-20 Revelation 22,6-end
3	27	Isaiah 29,15-end Matthew 13,44-end	19	57	Malachi 1 Matthew 19,1-12
4	11 <i>or</i> 28	1 Kings 18,17-39 John 1,19-28	20	4	Malachi 2 Matthew 19,13-15
5	12	Isaiah 30,1-18 Matthew 14,1-12	21	84	Malachi 3 Matthew 19,16-end
6	10	Isaiah 30,19-end Matthew 14,13-end	22	24	Malachi 4 Matthew 23,1-12
7	14	Isaiah 31 Matthew 15,1-20	23	48	Nahum 1 Matthew 23,13-28
8	73	Proverbs 8,12-25 Luke 1,26-28	24	85	Zechariah 2 Revelation 1,1-8
9	90	Isaiah 33,1-22 Matthew 15,29-end	25	8	Isaiah 65,17-25 Philippians 2,5-11
10	93, 94	Isaiah 35 Matthew 16,1-12	26	123	Genesis 4,1-10 Matthew 23,34-end
11	12 <i>or</i> 14	Isaiah 5,8-end Acts 13,13-41	27	97	Isaiah 6,1-8 1 John 5,1-12
12	26	Isaiah 38,1-8 Matthew 16,13-end	28	128	Isaiah 49,14-25 Mark 10,13-16
13	50, 54	Isaiah 38,9-20 Matthew 17,1-13	29	132	Jonah 1 Colossians 1,1-14
14	82	Isaiah 39 Matthew 17,14-21	30	65	Jonah 2 Colossians 1,15-23
15	44	Zephaniah 1 Matthew 17,22-end	31	148	Jeremiah 23,1-6 Colossians 2,8-15
16	49	Zephaniah 3,1-13 Matthew 18,1-20			

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.

Prayer before the Crib - God, our Father, you sent your only Son as a little Child to love and save us. To our lives, he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy and love. Lord, bless me and all who look upon his manger. May it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus and raise our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and Saviour of all. Fill our homes with hospitality, joy, gentleness and thanksgiving and guide our steps in the way of peace. Amen.

From the Book of Common Prayer (for Advent)

2nd Sunday in Advent: *BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The Collect was written by Archbishop Cranmer. It reflects the concern of the English Reformers that the Scriptures assume their proper authority and place, not only for doctrine and in worship, but also in daily living. It is most fitting that at the beginning of the Christian Year the gift from God of the Holy Scriptures is celebrated by the Household of God. We, who are Christians, live in the light of the First Coming in humility of the Lord Jesus even as we look for his Second Coming in glory. All the time in this interim period of grace we are to be taught by his sacred Word, the Holy Scriptures.

God has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our benefit, salvation, sanctification, instruction and education. And he has given this amazing gift to his people to be used under his perpetual care as a permanent possession for our good and his glory.

The verbs used - hear, read, mark, learn & inwardly digest - are so arranged as to suggest perhaps the movement from initial, superficial acquaintance with the content of the Bible to the profoundest reception of that content deep in the soul, in the heart, mind and will. To hear is to hear both with the outer ear and with the inner ear and thus hear in the mind and the conscience, where the seed of the word of God must be sown. To read is yet another route for the word to enter the soul. To mark is to pay close attention to what is heard and read, to meditate upon it, to chew the cud as it were. To learn is to commit to memory the essentials of what is heard and read. "*Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee*" (Psalm 119:11). To digest the word of God can only occur when there has been the receiving, the noting, the meditating and the remembering, for, in digestion, the spiritual food enters the "blood stream" of the soul. The result of the right reception of the Word of God is that (a) by patience; and (b) by the comfort of God's Word, we embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. Thus a basic theme of the Collect is the right use of Scripture as a means of preparing for the Second Advent as we live in the Light of the first Advent.

The Rev'd Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

15 Advent traditions from around the world

by Cerith Gardiner

As we wait patiently to celebrate the birth of Christ, we can start thinking about how to mark the beautiful season of Advent with our families and communities. While we might be used to the Advent calendar and wreath, there are plenty of other traditions from around the world that are inspiring to learn about and adopt. From placing even greater significance on our Nativity scene, to lighting candles in the window, you might take some inspiration from this list and try incorporating a new tradition to into your Advent this year.

1. *A candle in the window* - Although more popular in the 1970s, and usually more typical in rural Ireland, Catholics place a candle in the window to welcome Joseph and Mary in honour of their search for somewhere to stay.

2. *Advent calendar made of fir* - In Germany, an Advent calendar is made from a wreath of fir tree branches, decorated with 24 boxes. As with the regular Advent calendar, a box is opened each day to reveal a little gift.

3. *The Holy Family in search of shelter* - In Hungary, especially in small communities (village, district of a town, church congregation) children carry an image or statue of the Holy Family, singing carols. For a whole week (or for a certain number of days) the Holy Family is then hosted by someone from the community. The children tell the story of Mary and Joseph searching for shelter, all sing some carols, and the community gathers for prayer daily in the house sheltering the Holy Family. At the end of the week (or other period) the children process with the Holy Family to the next "shelter."

4. *Pastorets* - In various regions of Spain, locals gather to partake in a big play about the Christmas story, called the *pastoret*. With readings from the Bible and a selection of songs, different towns bring Christ's birth to life.

5. *Novena prayer and carols* - During Advent in Italy a special prayer called a Novena is said, traditionally in the nine days preceding Christmas. Often Benediction is held daily in churches and Carols are sung.

6. *Prayers in front of the Nativity scene* - In Italy, the Nativity scene takes pride of place in the home. From the start of Advent, the family gathers in front of the Nativity each day to say prayers and light a candle.

7. *The developing Nativity scene* - The Nativity scene is very important for French families. Many little figurines, called *Santons*, can be bought in markets to add to a huge "crèche." Just be sure not to add baby Jesus until Christmas morning, and the wise men at Epiphany and not before

8. *The Rorate Mass* - In the countries of the former Hapsburg Empire there are daily high Masses during Advent sung before sunrise. The name comes from the Mass' first prayer, the Introit, whose first words are *Rorate coeli*, meaning "Drop down ye heavens from above." The Mass begins in darkness and ends in light, symbolizing Christ's birth. The Rorate mass is often followed by the whole congregation having breakfast together.

9. *Getting spick and span* - Polish people like to celebrate the arrival of Christ by cleaning their homes from top to bottom -- including carpets and windows -- in preparation for the big day. Carpets are laid upside down on fresh snow to clean them gently but thoroughly.

10. *Adventsfenster (Advent windows)* - In villages and small towns in Switzerland, locals select 24 homes or businesses to decorate their windows in a holiday theme. During each day of Advent, people gather to see a window revealed at a certain time each night, to the sound of carols and often with drinks and snacks. The windows remain lit until Christmas Eve and beyond.

11. *Parols* - In the Philippines people prepare for Christmas by making bright and colorful lanterns to place in a strategic point in their home. The *parol* is like a star shining above the home, reminiscent of the star guiding the Magi.

12. *Posada* - Every night in Mexico from December 16 to 24, children take part in a procession called *posada* -- meaning inn or shelter. Reenacting Joseph and Mary looking for lodgings, the children process in the street with candles, visiting different houses until they find a willing host. There are celebrations, songs, Bible stories, and candy. Each night the children reflect on different qualities: humility, strength, detachment, charity, trust, justice, purity, joy and generosity.

13. *Fasting* - In the state of Kerala, India, the native home of many saints, Catholics are encouraged to fast from December 1 until Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

14. *Christmas tree hilltop* - When Advent begins in Greenland, villagers place a decorated Christmas tree on the top of a nearby hill for all to see.

15. *Stealing baby Jesus!* - Like most Latin American countries, Brazilians pay particular attention to their Nativity scene, but they also like to put on plays called *Los Pastores* -- *the Shepherds* -- an unusual take on the Christmas story where the newborn baby Jesus is kidnapped!

Meditations on the O-Antiphons

Meditations on the first four O-Antiphons are in the December 2021 parish magazine, available on the parish website.

The season of Advent is full of mystery and anticipation. During these weeks, the Church's liturgy leads the faithful patiently, yet deliberately, through the prophecies of the Old Testament, particularly the prophet Isaiah, to the silence and beauty of the Nativity. Our incarnate Lord, lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, is the fulfillment of all hope, and these last days of Advent are ushered in by the great *O Antiphons* — seven antiphons, or short chants, that are sung at the beginning of the *Magnificat* each evening at Vespers (Evening Prayer) from December 17 through December 23.

The *O-Antiphons* have been chanted in the Church since at least the 8th century. There are many levels to the symbolism and foreshadowing of the antiphons. Individually, they each speak on their own, addressing our Lord by a different title or name given to him in Old Testament prophecies, imploring him to come and save his people. These antiphons are called the "*O-Antiphons*" because each chant begins with great cry, "O ...":

- O *Sapientia* — O Wisdom
- O *Adonai* — O Lord
- O *Radix Jesse* — O Root of Jesse
- O *Clavis David* — O Key of David
- O *Oriens* — O Dayspring
- O *Rex Gentium* — O King of the Nations
- O *Emmanuel* — O God with Us

Collectively, they speak too. Looking at the titles, we find an acrostic. Taking the first letter of each antiphon, working in reverse, we see the Latin words *ERO CRAS*. Literally, these words translate to, "Tomorrow I will be," or perhaps more appropriately for Advent and the impending Nativity, "Tomorrow I will come." The text of each antiphon is scriptural and prophetic—the words of the chant are all based on passages from Isaiah that introduce us to the coming Christ-child.



Dec 21: O Dayspring: Tonight we surrender what is dark within us.

O Dawn of the East, Brightness of the Light Eternal and Sun of Justice, come and enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Some of our favourite passages in Scripture have to do with light: And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3) “Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my path...” (Psalm 119:105) “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.” (Luke 1:79) “The people in darkness have seen a great light...” (Matthew 4:16)

Why do we like these phrases so well that they bubble up within us with the barest prompting? We don’t even know how that happened — we haven’t purposely committed them to memory — and yet, there they are. “You are the light of the world...so let your light so shine before men...” (Matthew 5:14) “A light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5)

As children we were afraid of the dark, partly because of our imaginations, certainly, but perhaps also because darkness meant separation. Alone in the dark, we have no parent beside us, and shadows loom about what is familiar until we can no longer recognize it. Darkness is disorienting. The flowers that follow the sun simply close up, when darkness comes.

No wonder December 21, with its long, overlong night, is the day we call out: *O Dayspring, come!* Depart not from us. We know to whom it is we truly belong, and we invite him to hurry back to us, separated from us no longer: *O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.*

Tonight, we surrender that darkness we still hold within, that there will be nothing but light between us and the one who is Light itself.

Dec 22 - O King of the Gentiles - we were made for God.

O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: Come and save the human race which you fashioned from clay.

The last two lines of this chant call to mind the creation story in the book of Genesis. “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). From the dust or clay of the earth, our Lord has formed us for a particular purpose, namely, to share in the life of the Triune God, to reign with Christ, the King of the nations.

Within each and every person is the desire for God. There is no escaping this reality; it is simply part and parcel of being a human person. And because we are made for God, God has created us in such a way that we are able to know and to love him.

Sin, both original sin and our own personal sin, destroys this relationship with God. Through our sinful choices we exclude ourselves from the divine life for which we are created. Yet, in his great love, God sent his Son to redeem us, to rekindle that relationship with God, and open the doors to eternal life.

“O King of the nations!” the Church clamours today. Come to us and rekindle what was destroyed by sin. Give us the grace to love you above all things, and, as Christ teaches, give us the grace to love our neighbours as ourselves (Mt. 22:37-40). In his Christmas homily in 450, St. Leo the Great reminds us: “Indeed, the broad scope of Christian grace has given us greater reasons for loving our neighbor and no one must be left out.”

Dec 23 - O Emmanuel, God-With-Us: Come to us where we are!

This is the wedding feast, and the bridegroom is eager to love us. *O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Expected of the Nations and their Savior, come to save us, O Lord our God.*

Let us ponder our Infant King, soon to be born. Not in a palace but a cave. Laid not on silk but on straw. Not in a cradle, but in a food bin, and that not by accident. Because he is Real Food, Real Nourishment, Real Sustenance. He is the Bread that feeds, and through that act saves, and teaches, and heals. His Flesh will be the Bread that unites the lowly to the sovereign, earth to heaven, bride to bridegroom. But only if you want it, because the Bridegroom forces nothing.

He comes in with wood at his back, the foreshadowing of how he will go out — the Body consumed by the base and ignorant, who will “know not what they do.” Oh, but be consoled. Weep not for the babe with the wood at his back. This is all part of a plan, “...to be carried out in Christ, in the fullness of time, to bring all things into one in him, in the heavens and on earth.” (Ephesians 1:10)

O Emmanuel, O God-With-Us, Come with your Wisdom and teach us; Come with your Healing, and save us; Come with your Mercy, and gentle our fears that we might finally, finally, welcome you with a fullness of trust. May we be as eager to know you as you are to know us — O God-With-Us — until we are eternally One-With-You. Amen.

I love to live

A poem sent by Beth Bentley

Today, dear-Lord, I'm 80, and there's so much I haven't done.

I hope dear Lord you'll let me live until I'm 81.

But then, if I haven't finished all I want to do,

Would you let me stay awhile, until I'm 82.

So many places I want to go, so very much to see,

Do you suppose you could manage to make it to 83?

The world is changing very fast, there is so much in store,

I'd like very much to live until I'm 84.

And if by then I'm still alive,

I'd like to stay till 85!

More planes will be up in the air, so I would like to stick!

And see what happens to the world when I turn 86.

I know dear Lord, it's much to ask, (and it must be nice in Heaven)

But I'd really like to stay right here, until I'm 87.

I know by then I won't be fast, and sometimes I'll be late,

But it would be so pleasant to be around at 88.

I will have seen so many things, and had a wonderful time.

So I'm sure that I'd be willing to leave at the age of 89... maybe.

Just one more thing I'd like to say: dear Lord, I thank you kindly.

But if it's okay with you, I'd love to live past 90!



How St. Francis invented the first Nativity scene

by Philip Kosloski



In 1221, St. Francis had a novel idea. To celebrate the birth of Jesus, Francis wanted to recreate the experience of the first Christmas. He did this not with statues inside a church, but with animals in a humble hilltop grove.

Francis' inspiration came after traveling to the Holy Land and seeing the exact site of Christ's birth. The poverty of it all deeply impacted Francis and was a particular element that he wanted to celebrate on Christmas. Franciscan friar Thomas of Celano narrates the rest of the story:

About 15 days before the Nativity of the Lord, Francis said to a friend in Greccio, "For I would make memorial of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, and in some sort behold with bodily eyes His infant hardships; how He lay in a manger on the hay, with the ox and the ass standing by." There Simplicity was honoured, Poverty exalted, Humility commended; and of Greccio there was made as it were a new Bethlehem. The night was lit up as the day, and was delightful to men and beasts. Francis stood before the manger, full of sighs, overcome with tenderness and filled with wondrous joy. The solemnities of Mass were celebrated over the manger, and the priest enjoyed a new consolation.

According to St. Bonaventure, a miracle also occurred on that night and someone noticed St. Francis holding the Christ Child:

A certain valiant and veracious soldier ... affirmed that he beheld an Infant marvellously beautiful, sleeping in the manger, Whom the blessed Father Francis embraced with both his arms, as if he would awake Him from sleep.

St. Bonaventure goes on to talk about St. Francis of Assisi's personal devotion to the Baby Jesus that sparked this event:

The man of God, St. Francis, stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.

The scene was powerful for all present and emphasized the poverty into which Christ was born. It was truly "Franciscan" in every sense of the word. The idea caught on quickly. and in 1291 the first Franciscan pope (Nicholas IV) commissioned statues to create the first permanent Nativity scene in the Roman Basilica of St. Mary Major. Ever since, Nativity scenes in all shapes and sizes have been created throughout the world and they are one of the most popular Christmas traditions.

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Free Bibles

If you do not have a Bible, various Christian associations will send you one for free. Often they pay even for the postage. Normally, only one Bible can be ordered per person. Advent is a great time to start reading the BIBLE - so if you do not have one, go and check these websites:

<https://www.biblesforeurope.org> (*a more literal translation*)

<https://www.freebible.org.uk> (*the widespread New International Version*)

<https://www.freekjvbible.uk> (*King James Bible, traditional language*)

A prisoner of Christ Jesus

by Father Pál Bolváry

In the Barracks of the Border Guards

Only after a thorough search of my clothes could I get dressed again and then the first interrogation began. After giving my personal information, I had to relate in detail how I joined the Pauline Order. The typing AVO man must have been very sleepy, for each time the “Pálos” (Pauline) Order happened to be in the text, he always typed “páros” (paired). The first lieutenant was swearing at him when he read through the first page. He had to retype the whole report. After all this, it is easy to imagine that he continued the interrogation, treating me in the same unrestrained manner.

He inquired whether I used to visit the sick. Upon my affirmative answer, he instructed the officer to write: “I often visited the sick living in our neighbourhood and I agitated them against the existing order of the country.” According to his dictation, during the less than three years of my priesthood, “I made various and such ferocious attacks on the People’s Democracy,” that their record made up nearly ten type-written pages. When I did not want to sign this falsified “confession”, he threatened me by listing the “effective methods” they use with traitors, such as I, to make them sign their “confessions.”

We got lunch at about four in the afternoon. They brought us goulash soup and noodles in military mess-tins. After nearly twenty-four hours of starvation we all enjoyed the warm military food.

Opposite the former stable there were four public toilets, without water, just closets. These could be used only after meals when there were two guards nearby. One of the guards would watch those who stayed in the stable while the other one accompanied the person whose turn it was. We had to move around with our heads bent and hands behind us. We were not permitted to close the door and the guard had his machine gun pointed at the person sitting on the loo the whole time.

On September third, after lunch we had a guard who finally allowed us to stand up from our sitting position. From all the sitting our legs had become numb; we had to spend every night sitting. As we were standing, we could look out into the yard. We were shocked to see Father Tihamér being escorted to the toilet. Poor Mrs. Schandl almost collapsed. She had hoped that Fr. Tihamér and her family had arrived safely to Vienna. Only in that moment did we realise that the former house-servant, Sándor Rózsa, was nothing but an agent provocateur, a paid informant.

In prison in Győr

On the evening of September fourth, they put chains on our wrists again and put us onto a tarpaulin-covered truck that took us to the prison in Győr. It must have been nine at night when we arrived. I was given a first-floor corner cell. I had to stand a good ten minutes in front of the cell, with my face towards the wall, until a guard came with a blanket, mess-tin and spoon. He opened the door of the cell. The stench from the cell hit me. I became the cell's thirteenth guest. All the furniture of the cell consisted of two iron beds and two chamber pots. Since there were only two beds, there were ten men lying on the floor. I was the eleventh, lying immediately by the door. My feet were against the pots and so often during night, when someone had to use the chamber pots, they also accidentally "watered" my feet.

My shock and sadness were however lightened by some joy: Fr. Tihamér was in the same cell. He asked the man lying next to me to swop places with him. Lying side by side, we whispered throughout the night.

We were lucky to be together for almost a week. In the meantime, both of us were interrogated by the state-attorney. The days went by fast, but the nights passed very slowly and it was still very warm. There was an enormous number of bedbugs in the cell. There were nights when with Fr. Tihamér we killed two hundred of them on the wall. Twice daily, we were taken out for a walk in the prison yard. [...]

The trial of Fr. Tihamér took place before ours. He was sentenced to two years. Fr. Attila and I were sentenced to three years. Soon we were divided for work. We had to work in the basket-weaving department, with a daily income of 50-60 Hungarian pennies.

On February 11, 1951, Fr. Attila and I were taken to Vác. Fr. Tihamér had already gone there. We were awakened early in the morning. Our personal belongings were put into individual sacks that we had to carry under our arms. Our wrists and legs were in chains. Two guards with guns accompanied us to the train station. We traveled in a special coach.

Fr. Jenő must have found out which train had taken us from Győr. In civilian clothes, he traveled with us in the same coach. He sat in a way that amidst our dozing guards, with eyes and signs we could communicate at times. Luckily, our young corporal guard was a kind man so when the old guard went out to the toilet, Fr. Jenő was able to approach us and to give a chocolate bar to each of us.

Our train arrived to Vác early in the afternoon. From the station we were accompanied, walking to the "famous convict prison of Vác". After the official handing over and search, we were put into an empty, large cell.

The Psalms

Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd" - Protection and Provision

Certainly Psalm 23 must rank as one of the best known and best loved psalms. It voices in a very personal way confidence and trust in the Lord and it does so with poetic beauty and imagery. Striking is the contrast between Psalm 23 and Psalm 22. In the latter David's faith is stretched and tested to the limit as he struggles to comprehend why the Lord is not responding to his prayer. In this Psalm there appears a world far removed from the sense of abandonment.

God as shepherd - The opening metaphor "The Lord is my Shepherd" sets the tone for the whole Psalm. To appreciate the significance of the shepherd as a metaphor for the Lord, it is necessary to be aware of what this meant for David. In his culture the shepherd was an integral feature of life and a common sight, although his work was a very low rank. The shepherd had to live with the sheep twenty-four hours a day to fulfil the task of caring for them. He protected his flock from predators and provided for them by leading them to suitable pastures. He was responsible for the sheep and accountable for their welfare. All this contributed to the image of the shepherd being applied to the king himself, in relation to Israel, and even to God. The metaphor of the shepherd is rich with meaning and significance as it is associated with the Exodus from Egypt and the Hebrews' time in the wilderness, when God provided for and protected his people.

Verses 1-3 - The intimate force of this Psalm comes from the fact that David calls God "*my* Shepherd." This intimacy is unparalleled in the whole Old Testament and must be rooted in David's personal experience. As young shepherd, alone in the wilderness, he must have experienced God's presence, his closeness, and his help so many times. The following verses with their rich imagery further elaborate the concept of God feeding, nurturing, and sustaining not only his people in general but *me* personally. Green pastures suggest an abundance of spiritual sustenance. Still waters is an image of tranquility. Restoring the soul is an allusion to spiritual renewal.

No wonder that Jesus identified himself with the image of Good Shepherd and that Christians have ever since cherished this very image.

However before we are lulled into a false sense of security that the Christian life is a carefree existence without any concerns *because* the Lord is our, or *my*, Shepherd, a more realistic image of Christian life is depicted by the mention of the valley of the shadow of death and of the enemy.

Verse 4 - In this verse God, the shepherd of his people, *my* shepherd, also becomes a companion and traveller. This is as much true of life's difficult journeys in general as it is of the last journey: death. It is easy to see why this Psalm is so often chosen for funeral services: it reminds us of the comforting truth of God's nearness at the time of death and mourning.

Historically, this verse is a reference to the seasonal passage from the lowlands where sheep spent the winter, through the valleys, to the high pastures where they go in the summer. The valleys are places of rich pasture and water but they are also places of danger. Wild animals may lurk there and sudden floods and storms may occur. These valleys are also a favourite hiding place for thieves and robbers. The sun hardly ever reaches these valleys and so they are truly a place of shadows. It can be a frightening, lonely, testing, and dangerous place.

But the truth that David shares is that the Lord is his companion and his presence is with him, therefore he is not afraid of any danger. The concept of the shepherd's rod and staff refers to the Lord's protection, as the rod-club fended off wild beasts and the staff-crook guided and controlled the sheep.

Verses 5-6 - In the image of God as shepherd, companion, and traveller is further enriched by another one: he is the host and we are his guests.

The mention of the banquet may have an association with the sacrificial meal in the Temple to celebrate God's goodness; or it may allude to the Lord's provision for his people in the desert; just as it could be a reminder of the Passover when the Hebrews ate in haste a meal before their deliverance. For us, Christian, it is a reminder of the Lord's Supper and of the words of Christ, our good Shepherd: "I am the bread of life." In any case, the mention of the Lord preparing a meal and acting as host is a moving and powerful reminder of close fellowship with him.

Psalm 23 overflows with a clear confidence in the Lord's protection, provision, and presence. As David reflects on his life and the Lord in these last verses, he turns towards the future with a confident expectation of the Lord's provision once again and so he is able to dismiss his fears and his enemies with ease - they pose no concern for him anymore. Instead, he ecstatically visualises God preparing a banquet for him, at which he gives thanks and celebrates God's goodness. As he reflects on these things, David is overwhelmed by God's faithfulness and goodness - as should we be. What God, our shepherd - *my* shepherd! - is preparing for each one of us is an eternal feast in his presence in overflowing, unimaginable joy.

Saint of the month: St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552)

3 December

Jesus asked, “What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Matthew 16:26). The words were repeated to a young teacher of philosophy who had a highly promising career in academics. Francis Xavier, 24 at the time, and living and teaching in Paris, did not heed these words at once. They came from a good friend, Ignatius of Loyola, whose tireless persuasion finally won the young man to Christ. Francis then joined the Jesuits and together with St. Ignatius they vowed poverty, chastity, obedience, and apostolic service.

From Venice, where he was ordained a priest in 1537, Xavier went on to Lisbon and from there sailed to the East Indies, landing at Goa, on the west coast of India. For the next 10 years he laboured to bring the faith to such widely scattered peoples as the Hindus, the Malayans, and the Japanese.

Wherever he went, Xavier lived with the poorest people, sharing their food and rough accommodations. He spent countless hours ministering to the sick and the poor, particularly to lepers. Very often he had no time to sleep or even to say his breviary but he was filled always with joy.

Xavier went through the islands of Malaysia, then up to Japan. He learned enough Japanese to preach to simple folk, to instruct, and to baptize, and to establish missions for those who were to follow him. From Japan he had dreams of going to China, but this plan was never realized. Before reaching the mainland, he died. His remains are enshrined in the Church of Good Jesus in Goa.

Well, not *all* of his remains... For visitors to the Jesuit Church in Rome, one striking feature is a side chapel dedicated to a peculiar relic of St. Francis Xavier: his right forearm and hand. Everywhere he went Xavier was met with countless souls who'd never heard of Jesus. Not having a gift for languages, Xavier was able to preach the gospel through interpreters and his humble character. Miracles of healing also accompanied Xavier when traveling to the villages and this made him a popular figure.

Xavier was crowded by throngs of souls wanting to be healed as well as saved through the waters of Baptism. Throughout his life records report that Xavier's hand baptized more than 700,000 souls. The frequency was such, according to an account he later gave, “sometimes, by the bare fatigue of administering that sacrament, he was scarce able to move his arm.”

While it may seem strange to hold on to such a relic, it is a reminder of how each of us is an instrument of God. We may not be called to be a missionary in Asia baptizing thousands of souls, but God still uses our hands

to bring his love to other people. It could be a gentle touch or a heartfelt hug; whatever it is, we are God's instrument and our hands can bring his presence to others.

Indeed, all of us are called to “go and preach to all nations.” Our preaching is not necessarily on distant shores but to our families, our children, our husband or wife, our coworkers. And we are called to preach not with words, but by our everyday lives. Only by sacrifice, the giving up of all selfish gain, could Francis Xavier be free to bear the Good News to the world. Sacrifice is leaving yourself behind at times for a greater good, the good of prayer, the good of helping someone in need, the good of just listening to another. The greatest gift we have is our time. Francis Xavier gave his to others.

O God, who through the preaching of Saint Francis Xavier won many peoples to yourself, grant that the hearts of the faithful may burn with the same zeal for the faith and that Holy Church may everywhere rejoice in an abundance of offspring. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

St. Francis Xavier encourages us to love God for only one reason

When we say we “love God,” sometimes it isn't always for the purest motives. We may love God, *because* he blesses us with many graces. While this isn't bad in itself, St. Francis Xavier encourages us to love God because of who he is and how he loved us first — and not because of what he gives us.

In a similar way that a child loves a parent from the first moments of their life, we too should love God without any strings attached. This type of love can endure any type of hardship or difficulty.

Here is a prayer of St. Francis Xavier, called his “Hymn of Love,” that illustrates this basic principle, focusing on how we should love God, not because of any future gain or to avoid a future punishment, but because God is God and already showed the depths of his love for us on the Cross.

O God, I love Thee, for Thyself and not that I may heaven gain, nor because those who love Thee not, must suffer hell's eternal pain. Thou, O my Jesus! Thyself didst me upon the cross embrace. For me didst bear the nails and spear and manifold disgrace. And griefs and torments numberless, and sweat of agony. Even death itself—and all for one who was Thine enemy. Then why, O blessed Jesu, should I not love Thee well, not for the sake of winning heaven, or of escaping hell; not with the hope of gaining aught; not seeking a reward. But as Thyself hast loved me, O ever-loving Lord, even so I love Thee, and will love, and in Thy praise will sing, solely because Thou art my God and my eternal King.

Vicar

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The Vicar's day-off is Monday. In case of pastoral emergency, please, try to contact the Churchwardens, the Assistant Priest, or the Parish Office first. With enquires about Baptisms, Weddings, Banns, or Funerals, please, contact the Vicar.

Assistant Priest

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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

Liz Evans - 01305 771217 - stpweymouth@gmail.com

S.P.O.T.

Pat Perry - 01305 750951

Parish Hall & Activities

*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!