

# High Tide

Parish Magazine  
Weymouth, St. Paul with Fleet



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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 31<sup>st</sup> December**. Please, send all articles, information, news you wish to be published by Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December.*

Front cover image: "Nativity" from the Würzburg Psalter  
(unknown artist, ca. 1240-1250). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, U.S.A.

## From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

*“In that day the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey. Alleluia.”* This is the very first prayer of the Breviary (the book that contains the daily prayers for priests and monks) and it is composed of some verses from the prophets Joel and Amos. Written sources testify that cathedrals and parish churches, bishops and priests, monks and lay faithful started the holy season of Advent every year with this very same prayer for at least the last 1500 years. There is a certain cosiness to this prayer.

It is no surprise that Christmas markets and winter fairs are all trying (with great success!) to lure people in with mulled wine and hot chocolate, that Christmas treats are all full of fragranced spices (mince pies, puddings). It is cold and dark outside and so we crave things that offer sweetness, colour, and warmth to our senses. It's not a rocket science to see why everyone puts on some weight during winter...

However, we are created in such a wonderful way that it is not only our bodies but our souls as well that desire “cosy things”—sweetness, colour, and fragrance. Hence the great success of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholic revival in the Church of England with its “smells and bells”, a revival that, amongst many, called our parish into existence as well.

The holy season of Advent is a time of spiritual cosiness. The sweetness of prophecies and hymns, the warmth of candlelit services, the gorgeous colour of deep-blue vestments, the gentleness of prayers and readings at Mass are all there to fill our souls with sweetness, colour, and fragrance. To help us, so to say, to put on some spiritual weight.

But what good is a mug of hot chocolate on a TV screen? or what comfort could all the lights of a Christmas market bring us if we stay at home? or what pleasure would a box of mince pie cause to our sense if we actually never buy one in a shop?

Equally, the spiritual cosiness of Scripture, prayer, rituals, vestments, candles, and hymns will never smooth and comfort, nurture and fill our souls unless we decide to expose ourselves to them. May the coming weeks and the Feast of Christmas be not about shopping, cooking, and cleaning only but rather, in a more Christian way, about “spiritual cosiness.” Let us read the Scriptures (especially the prophets and Gospels), come to Mass more frequently, pray a bit more during Advent so that at the end of this holy season God may look at us and say with delight: *“My beloved grew fat!”* (Deut 32). Only spiritually, of course!

Assuring you of my prayers,

I am, ever yours in Christ,

*Fr. Gregory*



### Advent preparation

- **Holy Confession** — as a Christmas Gift to the Lord Jesus who delights and takes dwelling in a contrite heart (*Isaiah 57,15 Psalm 51*).
- **Frequent Holy Communion** — the Lord Jesus has a deep desire to be united to us in the Holy Communion (*Luke 22,15*). Let us respond generously to his call.
- **Holy Scripture** — You can use the list on page 35, the readings of Morning or Evening prayer or of the Novena on page 10, or read one of the 24 chapters daily from St. Luke's Gospel. Whenever, however: just read the Bible and let the Lord Jesus talk to you in his own words!
- **Charity & Reconciliation** — Love is God; hate is darkness. They are both approaching and the choice is ours. (*1 John*)



***“For to us, a child is born, to us, a son is given,  
and he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9,6-7)***

The day and season of Christmas is a time of love, joy, and peace.  
May God make us rich in them.  
May they be our gift at Christmas and our blessing all year through!

Wishing a peaceful Christmas to all our parishioners and readers,  
to their friends and families,  
and to every person of good will.

***“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,  
which is Christ the Lord.  
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”  
(Luke 2,11.14)***

## 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.

## A simple, prayerful preparation for Christmas (16-24 December)

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

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

### *Christmas Prophecies:*

**V.** Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel. Be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold the Lord cometh, and there shall be a great light in that day. The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk. (*Zephaniah 3,14; Joel 3,18*) **R. Our Lord and King is drawing near, O come, let us adore Him.**

**V.** Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. (*cf. Jeremiah 23,5*) **R. Our Lord and King is drawing near, O come, let us adore Him.**

**V.** Behold, the Lord and King shall appear, and He shall not deceive. Though he delay, wait for him; because he will surely come, he will not tarry. (*Habakkuk 2,3*) **R. Our Lord and King is drawing near, O come, let us adore Him.**

**V.** The Lord shall come down like rain upon the fleece of Gideon. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills righteousness. All the kings of the lands shall adore Him, and every nation shall serve Him. (*cf. Judges 6,38; Ps 72,3; Is 2,4-5*) **R. Our Lord and King is drawing near, O come, let us adore Him.**

**V.** Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and his name shall be called: "The mighty God." Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. (*Is 9,6-7*) **R. Our Lord and King is drawing near, O come, let us adore Him.**

**V.** Thou, Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel. He shall be great unto the ends of the earth, and he shall be the peace. (*Micah 5,2-5*) **R. Our Lord and King is drawing near, O come, let us adore Him.**

**Only on the Eve of Christmas** - Tomorrow the wickedness of the whole world will be destroyed, and over us will reign the Saviour of the world. **R. Our Lord and King is drawing near, O come, let us adore Him.**

*One or all of the following Psalms and readings can be prayed here:* **16 Dec:** Ps 62; Genesis 3,1-15; Romans 1,18-26; **17 Dec:** Ps 49; Genesis 22,15-18; Roman

5,12-21; **18 Dec:** Ps 43; 1 Samuel 2,1-10; Romans 4,13-23; **19 Dec:** Ps 123; Deuteronomy 7,6-21; Acts 3,18-26; **20 Dec:** Ps 4; Isaiah 7,1-16; Romans 10,5-11; **21 Dec:** Ps 84; Micah 5; Luke 1,26-39; **22 Dec:** Ps 48; Isaiah 11,1-10; Ephesians 2,12-22; **23 Dec:** Ps 89; Luke 1,26-38; Matthew 1,18-25; **24 Dec:** Ps 85; Luke 2,1-20

**16 Dec - O Virgin of virgins**, how shall this be? For neither before thee was any like thee, nor shall there be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery.

**17 Dec - O Wisdom**, that proceedest from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly! come and teach us in the way of prudence.

**18 Dec - O Adonai**, and leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst to Moses in the fire of the flaming bush, and gavest him the law on Sinai; come and redeem us by thy outstretched arm.

**19 Dec - O Root of Jesse**, who standest as the ensign of the people; before whom kings shall not open their lips; to whom the nations shall pray: come and deliver us; tarry now no more.

**20 Dec - O Key of David**, and sceptre of the house of Israel! who openest, and no man shutteth: who shuttest, and no man openeth; come, and lead the captive from prison, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

**21 Dec - O Dawn of East**, splendour of eternal light, and Sun of justice! come and enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

**22 Dec - O King of nations**, and their desired One, and the corner-stone that makest both one; come and save man whom thou formedst out of slime.

**23 Dec - O Emmanuel**, our King and Lawgiver, the Expectation and Saviour of the nations! come and save us, O Lord our God!

**24 Dec - O King of peace**, that wast born before all ages, come by the golden gate; visit them whom thou hast redeemed, and lead them back to the place whence they fell by sin.

**V.** Let us pray. Hasten, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and delay not; and bestow upon us the help of Thy heavenly power, that they who trust in Thy goodness may be helped by the consolations of Thy coming. Who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **R.** Amen. **V.** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore. **R.** Amen.

## S.P.O.T.

*Pat Perry writes:*



We are now established in the corner shop, only two doors away from the old shop. The move had its problems but went very well, so much to do. It took us a week to move but we needed that time to sort out the working conditions of our volunteer team. We had a team of volunteers from the church and customers who came with tools to help with fitments.

The kitchen has been updated with new units improving storage and now easy to keep clean. The storage area is coming into a working area, still excess wood and plastic to be moved but cannot complete until we have the shop complete. Minor problems?

The sorting area works very well, a system where only one bag is sorted, checked and priced, steamed and put ready to go into the shop. Keeping the sorted area as uncluttered as possible. Hopefully volunteers will be able to eat lunch in the sorting area leaving the shop floor more open for customers. Such a big part of this shop is customers who just want to exchange a few words with someone who can listen.

The new floor looks great and so much easier to keep clean, we have many compliments on how good the floor looks. The shop floor is three times larger than the old shop. We have tried to keep all clothes at eye level making it easier to reach. Jigsaws, books and Bric-a-brac areas are constantly being updated.

This larger floor area and no step allows wheel chairs and prams to have access, we even have an area where a child can leave a bike whilst browsing toys. More room to move around with less congested areas for quiet conversation.

The outside of the shop is being addressed. New signage is going up in the early part of December, declaring who and what we are. We will have our own identity, not a “party shop” not a “repair shop for fridges etc.” but a shop belonging to the church!

Parking could be a problem but I do advise parking at the church and walking down. It will take time for customers to use St Paul’s carpark.

We now store bags and boxes in the shop, no longer do we move boxes to the church for storage. This means the ‘Ragman’ collects from the shop. Rubbish is collected several times a week.

Please call in and see this new shop, you will be made very welcome. This week is the preparation for Christmas. Does anyone else refer to Stir up Sunday? This is the time Christmas puddings and Christmas cakes are made. In SPOT our preparation is unpacking Christmas, displaying unadorned Christmas trees, baubles in any colour, garlands, unwanted gifts being recycled. Christmas Jumpers in every size and colour being sold as soon as put on display. I am still looking for my three Kings...any offers?

We have INTERNET!! At last, now we can sell on Market Place and look up realistic prices for rare objects.

It would be good if our St Paul’s family came to view the new shop and see where we work. Look forward to seeing you.

PS. We are always looking for volunteers. We desperately need some one to open and close the shop one day a week...HELP! Come and talk to us please.



## Letter from Oxford

*Connor Hansford writes:*



First, let me say thank you to everyone who gave money towards my deacon's stole – it arrived a couple of weeks ago and it's beautiful. Thanks especially to Lesley for organising the collection and to Pat for ordering the stole and sending it on. I'll be able to wear it in a little under three years' time! It depicts Our Lady of Fatima (*Fatima* is a great watch, and it's available with Amazon Prime.)

I miss you! Theological college is a strange place. Blue and I have a bungalow and a cat, so we have all the additional responsibilities that come with that – not like these single students, whose rooms are vacuumed for them!

Morning and Evening Prayer at 9am and 4.30pm are mandatory, although the 7.30am Eucharist that takes place three times a week is not.

On Fridays I am on placement at a care home in Oxford and on Sundays I am on placement at the Wesley Memorial Church, also in Oxford (our placements supervisor is keen on ecumenism). Additionally, they wanted me to gain experience of 'low' church, but there are no inclusive evangelical churches in Oxford. 'Inclusive church' is a funny old thing – I always found St Paul's to be extremely inclusive, but I expect you would be last in line to join the Inclusive Church Network! Hence, these kinds of labels are not very helpful.

What does an average week look like? I have lectures most of the day Monday (currently Theological Reflection and Intro to Christian Worship), plus prayers; Tuesdays are relatively light, although that's because all the teaching takes place in the evening to accommodate the part-time students (Old Testament, 6.15pm to 9.30pm); Wednesdays I have a lecture in the morning (Pastoral Care), plus prayers; Thursdays there's Bible study at 9.40am, and Saturday is my 'day off' (chance would be a fine thing!). I have handed in three essays already and I have six due before February. There is a Eucharist every day, though the only time attendance is compulsory is on Wednesday mornings at 11.45.

This week and next I'm assistant morning sacristan and duty afternoon sacristan respectively, which means I finally get to wear my new

cassock! I have assisted at the Eucharist twice, once being yesterday afternoon, and that only because the person meant to be assisting was ill.

On Monday afternoons is what is called 'Alternative Worship' where students can be creative, albeit within the confines of a Service of the Word, as specified in Common Worship. Everything is Common Worship except on Thursday mornings and Friday afternoons when we use the Book of Common Prayer. No Missal, alas.



Monday's alt-Eucharist was an abomination. It was designed (not by me, I hasten to add) to be an accessible, deaf-friendly, all-age worship but the children screamed so loud that nobody heard the speaker, who was deaf! The organist left halfway through to get earplugs (I've never heard *Servant King* played so quickly) and the president was so keen to finish, he thrust the paten at me so hard it hurt my sternum. Perhaps I oughtn't tell you that one little boy, on being given Holy Communion, promptly fed it to his toy dinosaur. I nearly wept. Indeed, I was so heartbroken I joined some of the other students in a wine (or two) by the fire before the Ordiplosses (the spouses and partners group) met at 8pm.



There are not enough hours in the day. For instance, now I have a lecture from the Very Revd. Canon Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem, then there's a Eucharist, then dinner, then Evening Prayer, then it's Old Testament for three hours, with a ten-minute tea break in the middle. Oh, and there's also Compline every night at half-nine, but if I went to that I'd never see Blue, let alone Percy (that's the cat). Because I was sacristan this morning and because I had to wash up and have a shower, I didn't do any

of the Mission and Ministry essay that is due on December 12<sup>th</sup>. It's good practice for ministry all this rushing around, and I wouldn't have it any other way. (Well, apart from the dinosaur).

## An Introduction

I am delighted to be working in the parish. A few words of introduction. I live in Wyke, a tiny hamlet between Sherborne and Yeovil. I have two adult children, a son and also a daughter. Both started their nursing training in September 2023. I qualified as a Psychiatric Nurse in 1999 and I still nurse on a full-time basis.

I trained for ministry at Ripon College, Cuddesdon. I completed my nursing and theology degrees, managing Dyslexia and Dyspraxia. I was ordained Deacon in 2007 and ordained Priest in 2008. I have previously exercised ministry in the Diocese of Oxford and also the Diocese of Bath and Wells. I am at present exploring a possible vocation with The Community of The Resurrection in Mirfield, Yorkshire. This is an Anglican monastic community in the Benedictine tradition. There are 15 monks in the community at present.

I am also a member of Forward in Faith. I will be working in the parish on a part-time basis and look forward to meeting you all over the coming months.

With best wishes, Father James

## Reflection on death

*Fr James writes:*

*“Keep death always before your eyes...”* Rule of St. Benedict 4.47. *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, Neither have entered into the heart of man, The things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”* (1 Corinthians 2,9)

O God at the tenderness of your love I have wept. You gently embrace my life in your hands, wounded and scared by my sins. You have prepared a dwelling place in heaven for me, where one day I may abide with you. You beckon me towards this place of perfect peace, and how my heart is torn with longing to be with you. Do not leave me long on earth, where mere human existence separates us, but open for me the door of resurrection life and leave me gently through.

*“We have little to be afraid of, or worry about in death. God is love. God is mercy.”* (A monk)

*“Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides [of death] always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love, that if one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go hence first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father’s mercy.”* (St. Cyprian of Carthage)



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

**Anniversaries of death**

**Order of Morning and Evening Prayer**

## Calendar for December 2023

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

## Daily Intentions



## Anniversaries of death

*We pray for...*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Dying - *Frances Geroghty, Ted Marshall, Sheila Smallman*  
2<sup>nd</sup> Shrine of Walsingham - *Max Williams pr., Olive Ames*
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Our Parish - *Blessie May Martin, Robert Keat*  
4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. Aldhelm: our Servers - *Sam Eades*  
5<sup>th</sup> Our Congregation  
6<sup>th</sup> Children living in poverty - *Trixie Babb*  
7<sup>th</sup> Priests & vocations - *Ben Bowring*  
8<sup>th</sup> Greater devotion to Our Lady  
9<sup>th</sup> Cell of O.L.W. - *Shaun Tolman, Brian Smart*
- 10<sup>th</sup> Our Parish - *Herbert Rod, Olivia Harding*  
11<sup>th</sup> Peace - *Alex*  
12<sup>th</sup> Strong hope and faith  
13<sup>th</sup> Homeless & destitute - *Kay Berriman*  
14<sup>th</sup> Every conceived but endangered human life - *John Seymour*  
15<sup>th</sup> Departed - *Ethel Teece*  
16<sup>th</sup> The Bishop and the See of Oswestry - *Mo Palmer*
- 17<sup>th</sup> Our Parish  
18<sup>th</sup> Families - *Edith Sibley, Michael Houghton bp.*  
19<sup>th</sup> A spirit of penitence - *Madeline Pryer, Freda Taylor, George Winspear*  
20<sup>th</sup> Those in prison - *Richard Harbord*  
21<sup>st</sup> All parishes & churches dedicated to St. Thomas - *Ali Thomas*  
22<sup>nd</sup> Sick - *Joseph Howell-Jones pr.*  
23<sup>rd</sup> All for whom Christmas is a difficult time
- 24<sup>th</sup> Our Parish  
25<sup>th</sup> Our Parish - *Peter Withey, Jessie Evans, Fred Semmons, Andrew Rook, Edna Sale, Margaret Hornby*  
26<sup>th</sup> Our Parish - *Les Bugler, Andree Dandou, Ramona Yates, Josephine (Jo) Farn*  
27<sup>th</sup> NHS & Social care workers - *John Dawson*  
28<sup>th</sup> Children: victims of violence, abuse - *Ian Edgar, Eileen Clarey, Donald Turner pr.*  
29<sup>th</sup> Conversion of England - *Celia Biles, Lilia Bullock*  
30<sup>th</sup> All who lost loved ones this year - *Thelma, Stanley Waight*  
31<sup>st</sup> God's blessing and peace for 2024 - *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.

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.

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

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 88	Isaiah 22,1-14 Matthew 11,1-19	3	44	Isaiah 2,1-5 Luke 12,35-48
2	145	Isaiah 24 Matthew 11,20-end	4	50	Isaiah 25,1-9 Matthew 12,1-21

5	82	Isaiah 26,1-13 Matthew 12,22-37	19	146	Isaiah 38,9-20 Matthew 17,1-13
6	7	Isaiah 28,1-13 Matthew 12,38-end	20	46	Isaiah 39 Matthew 17,14-21
7	42	Isaiah 28,14-end Matthew 13,1-23	21	92	Ecclesiasticus 2 John 11,1-16
8	45 v. 10-17	Genesis 3,1-5 Luke 1,26-28	22	124	Zephaniah 2 Matthew 18,1-20
9	9	Isaiah 29,15-end Matthew 13,44-end	23	130	Zephaniah 3 Matthew 18,21-end
10	80	Baruch 5,1-9 Luke 1,5-20	24	144	Isaiah 7,10-16 Romans 1,1-7
11	30	Isaiah 30,1-18 Matthew 14,1-12	25	110	Isaiah 62,1-5 Matthew 1,18-end
12	56	Isaiah 30,19-end Matthew 14,13-end	26	13	Jeremiah 26,12-15 Acts 6
13	63	Isaiah 31 Matthew 15,1-20	27	21	Exodus 33,12-end 1 John 2,1-11
14	54	Isaiah 32 Matthew 15,21-28	28	36	Baruch 4,21-27 Matthew 18,1-10
15	31	Isaiah 33,1-22 Matthew 15,29-end	29	19	Jonah 1 Colossians 1,1-14
16	43	Isaiah 35 Matthew 16,1-12	30	113	Jonah 2 Colossians 1,15-23
17	62	Isaiah 12 Luke 1,57-66	31	105 v. 1-11	Isaiah 63,7-9 Ephesians 3,5-12
18	40 v. 1-11	Isaiah 38,1-8 & 21-22 Matthew 16,13-end			

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

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

*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 147	Isaiah 41,21-end Revelation 17	17	68 v. 1-8	Malachi 4 Philippians 4,4-7
2	150	Isaiah 42,1-17 Revelation 18	18	26	Isaiah 49,14-25 1 Thessalonians 5,1-11
3	25 v. 1-9	Isaiah 1,1-20 Matthew 21,1-13	19	57	Isaiah 50 1 Thessalonians 5,12-end
4	71	Isaiah 42,18-end Revelation 19	20	4	Isaiah 51,1-8 2 Thessalonians 1
5	74	Isaiah 43,1-13 Revelation 20	21	139	Job 42,1-6 1 Peter 1,3-12
6	77	Isaiah 43,14-end Revelation 21,1-8	22	48	Isaiah 51,17-end 2 Thessalonians 3
7	17	Isaiah 44,1-8 Revelation 21,9-21	23	89 v. 1-37	Isaiah 52,1-12 Jude 1
8	73	Proverbs 8,12-25 Luke 1,26-28	24	85	Zechariah 2 Revelation 1,1-8
9	27	Isaiah 45,1-13 Revelation 22,6-end	25	8	Isaiah 65,17-25 Philippians 2,5-11
10	40 v. 12-end	1 Kings 22,17-28 Romans 15,4-13	26	86	Genesis 4,1-10 Matthew 23,34-end
11	28	Isaiah 45,14-end 1 Thessalonians 1	27	97	Isaiah 6,1-8 1 John 5,1-12
12	11	Isaiah 46 1 Thessalonians 2,1-12	28	128	Isaiah 49,14-25 Mark 10,13-16
13	10	Isaiah 47 1 Thessalonians 2,13-end	29	132	Isaiah 57,15-end John 1,1-18
14	73	Isaiah 48,1-11 1 Thessalonians 3	30	65	Isaiah 59,1-15 John 1,19-28
15	90	Isaiah 48,12-end 1 Thessalonians 4,1-12	31	148	Jeremiah 23,1-6 Colossians 2,8-15
16	94	Isaiah 49,1-13 1 Thessalonians 4,13-end			

*Each reading ends with these words:*

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

## MAGNIFICAT

*Before Christmas:* In that day the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey. Alleluia.

*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:* In that day the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey. Alleluia.

*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

**The Circumcision of Christ:** *ALMIGHTY God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man: Grant us the true Circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

The Collect is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by adoption and grace is also our Father. Circumcision was the entrance into the covenant of the Law (Genesis 17:12) and to receive it implied taking on the whole obligation of the Law. It was the Father's will that his Incarnate Son should, as one born of a woman and under the Law, submit to that Law. Thus “*when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus*” (Luke 2:21). Yet he did not submit to the Law for his own sake, but for ours in order to fulfil in our place our debt to the whole Law of God, ceremonial and moral. He was born to be our Representative and Substitute, whether we be Jew or Gentile. And the shedding of the drops of blood at his circumcision point to the greater shedding of his precious blood for us at Calvary, thirty or so years later.

In the light of this crucial doctrine about the Incarnation, Circumcision and Obedience of Christ Jesus, we earnestly pray for an internal gift of grace, the true circumcision of the Spirit. Not the old circumcision of the flesh but “*circumcision of the heart, in the spirit*” (Romans 2:28-29). That is, we ask for the action of the Holy Spirit upon our spirits that energised by heavenly power we shall be enabled to cut away all sinful desires from our hearts and to put them to death. For it is only when the power of evil desires and habits is dispelled from the soul, that we are able seriously to obey the will of the Lord, our God.

Thus, when spiritually circumcised, we are able to present out bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1). Hands, cleansed and ready to work on God's assignments; feet, washed and ready to run his errands of mercy and love; eyes, purified from lust, ready to meditate upon and contemplate God's works and words; ears, cleansed of flattery and enticement, ready to hear the voice of God and the cry of the needy; the tongue, mortified of evil speech and idle words, ready to praise the Lord - in all a living sacrifice!

*The Rev'd Dr Peter Toon (+2009)*

## St. Joseph's doubt and the Angel's gift

by Carl E. Olson

“Looking on thee, O Unwedded One,  
and dreading a hidden wedlock, O Sinless One,  
the chaste Joseph was riven in mind with a storm of doubts.

That is how the anxious state of Joseph was poetically described by the unknown author of the great Akathist hymn (c. 6<sup>th</sup> century) to the blessed Virgin Mary as he considered what to do with his young and pregnant betrothed. Joseph, following the usual Jewish practice, had been covenanted to Mary; their betrothal was, for all intents and purposes, as legally binding as marriage. According to Jewish law, this meant the betrothal could only end in one of two ways: divorce or death (Deut 24,1-4).

Although devotion to St. Joseph has grown tremendously in recent centuries, it is still easy to overlook both the tremendous decisions he faced and the great character he demonstrated in making those decisions.

The Gospel of Matthew describes Joseph as a “*righteous man*.” This is not some vague reference to Joseph simply being a nice guy, but is a direct recognition of his whole-hearted commitment to the Law. “*And it will be righteousness for us,*” said the Hebrews at Mount Sinai, upon being given the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, “*if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us*” (Deut 6,25).

Joseph was careful to follow the commandments; he desired to love and serve God completely. Yet he was faced with a gut-wrenching, scandalous situation: a young bride who was already pregnant. However, Joseph was “*unwilling to expose Mary to shame*” and had decided to divorce her—or, better translated, “*to send her away quietly*.” Some of the Church fathers and doctors believed that Joseph had suspected Mary of adultery. Others thought he had withheld moral judgment, being genuinely perplexed by the strange situation. And some, including St. Thomas Aquinas, believed Joseph knew of the miraculous nature of Mary's pregnancy from the start, and had sought to separate himself from her because of a deep sense of unworthiness.

So we don't know what Joseph knew prior to the angel of the Lord appearing to him. Rather remarkably, we also don't know what Joseph may have said, simply because not one word that he uttered is recorded! But we do learn some important things from the words of the angel, as well as from Joseph's actions.

The angel provided Joseph with three essential gifts and truths. First, the divine messenger granted him the gift of peace: “*Do not be afraid to take*

*Mary your wife into your home.”* The coming of the Lord is always a gift of peace to those who love and serve him.

Secondly, he told Joseph there was a divine plan in place: Mary will give birth to Jesus—which means “*Yahweh saves*”—who will save his people from sin. Joseph would surely have recognized this as a description of the long-awaited Messiah.

Finally, the angel provided the prophetic background to this stunning event, the passage from Isaiah 7. This would have further reinforced the reality of the divine plan.

Joseph, in turn, did three things. He thought, first and foremost, about Mary and her wellbeing. He acted justly, without concern for himself, even though he had every legal right to be upset. A good husband puts the needs and reputation of his wife before his own.

Secondly, he placed his trust and hope in God’s promise. Although we never hear any words from Joseph, we are told of his actions. A godly man walks the talk, but with a minimum of talk!

Third, Joseph embraced the daunting task of being the foster father of the Son of God. Why? Because he trusted in God despite the strangeness of the situation.

And what is the conclusion of the verse of the Akathist hymn quoted above?

“...but learning that your conception was of the Holy Spirit, he cried out: ‘Alleluia!’”

*(Article originally appeared in the 19 Dec 2010 issue of Our Sunday Visitor newspaper.)*



## Florence 2023

*Jeanne James writes:*

On my recent trip to Florence we were very thrilled to be able to go to Mass in Il Duomo (the cathedral). The Mass of course was in Italian but as the priest spoke very clearly and slowly we were able to understand most of his homily.



We went one day to Pisa on the train. The leaning tower dominates the space and the cathedral was glorious with an absolutely stunning pulpit depicting scenes from Annunciation to Last Judgement. The Campo Santo is an ancient graveyard which is filled with the holy soil brought from Palestine at the time of the second crusade. The Campo Santo has wonderful frescoes depicting many scenes from the Old and New Testaments. The Sinopie Museum shows the drawings traced out on a first layer of plaster. It is red pigment which is mixed with water and applied by brush. The frescoists would put down their ideas tracing out the scenes and outlining the figures which are the preparatory drawings for the frescoes in the Campo Santo.

Back in Florence we visited the San Miniato al Monte. It has a wonderful painting of Christ with Mary and St Minias on the ceiling behind the main altar.

Another day we went to the Museo di San Marco where we saw the Annunciation fresco by Fra Angelico. It shows magnificent colours in Angel Gabriel's wings. Mary looked contemplative as she considered what had been asked of her – a huge responsibility.

The monks' cells each had a fresco which was intended to inspire







meditation. They depict the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the mysteries of Christian faith.

We visited the church of Santissima Annunziata which is a beautiful church. Using my natural charm and charisma I managed to convince an old priest to break protocol and allow us to go into the Cappella di San Luca to see the fresco by Vasari depicting St. Luke painting Mother and Child (it is usually open only on special or feast days). The priest (Fr Anthony) didn't speak a word of English but he was intent on giving us the history of the chapel and a short sermon on life and death (from what we could translate).

Near the end of the trip we spent a day in Siena. What a beautiful place. It has a shell shaped "square" where they race horses twice a year. It is supposedly quite a spectacle. The Duomo has a black\* and white façade and interior.

It is stunning inside with beautiful ceilings and floors. The high altar is exquisite with an enormous ciborium. Behind this altar is a large painting of the Assumption of Mary. The marble pulpit by Pisano concerns Salvation and the Last Judgement. Seven scenes around the pulpit narrate the life of Christ. The whole floor is mosaic. The library is full of frescoes and choir books





with intricate artwork.

The frescoes tell the story of Piccolomini who eventually became Pope Pius II. The baptistery was under repair so we couldn't see it properly and the crypt contains relics of Patron Saints. You could spend a whole day just in this cathedral.

On our final day we went to the church of Santo Spirito which has paintings by Florentine masters. The church is similar to San Lorenzo but has more space with arches trimmed in gray which are supported by columns of the same colour.

Apart from the sightseeing we tasted lots of lovely Italian food in different little family-run trattorias and restaurants – many different pasta dishes, pizza, smoked swordfish, salami, different cheeses and breads and sweet plates of panforte, ricciarelli, torta della nonna, pan coi santi and cantucci dipped in vin santo. If you ever have the chance to go you will not be disappointed.

*(\*In reality, it is a very, very dark green. Photos: 1. Pulpit, Cathedral of Pisa; 2. Fra Angelico's Annunciation; 3. Vasari's St. Luke depicting the Blessed Virgin; 4. Cathedral of Siena; 5. Cathedral of Florence; 6. Cathedral of Pisa.)*



## Read the Bible in a year - in chronological order (as events happened)

### December

- 1 1 Corinthians 9-11
- 2 1 Corinthians 12-14
- 3 1 Corinthians 15-16
- 4 2 Corinthians 1-4
- 5 2 Corinthians 5-9
- 6 2 Corinthians 10-13
- 7 Acts 20,1-3; Romans 1-3
- 8 Romans 4-7
- 9 Romans 8-10
- 10 Romans 11-13
- 11 Romans 14-16
- 12 Acts 20,4-38; Acts 21; Acts 22; Acts 23,1-35
- 13 Acts 24-26
- 14 Acts 27-28
- 15 Colossians 1-4; Philemon
- 16 Ephesians 1-6
- 17 Philippians 1-4
- 18 1 Timothy 1-6
- 19 Titus 1-3
- 20 1 Peter 1-5
- 21 Hebrews 1-6
- 22 Hebrews 7-10
- 23 Hebrews 11-13
- 24 2 Timothy 1-4
- 25 2 Peter 1-3; Jude
- 26 1 John 1-5
- 27 2 John; 3 John
- 28 Revelation 1-5
- 29 Revelation 6-11
- 30 Revelation 12-18
- 31 Revelation 19-22

## The road to Wigan's tears

*by The Rev'd Marcus Walker*

We need to talk about Wigan.

“Why Wigan?” you might ask. Because Wigan is the prototype for a whole new way of being Anglican which is being rolled out across various dioceses and, being the first of this model, it has been the subject of a detailed study and shown to be a disaster.

This is not hyperbole. I'm not sure how else to describe a scheme which drives away fully a third of your congregation and results in a collapse of giving by a third, which cost £1.2 million to implement and has resulted in the deficits of the churches involved shooting up from £56,000 per year to £295,666.

Let's go back to the beginning. Wigan was the first project of a vast scheme of national spending called “Strategic Development Funding”. SDF is the brainchild of Archbishop Welby and redirects the money made available by the Church Commissioners towards projects designed to bring many more people to church — projects focused around “fresh expressions of church”, which could not be spent on resourcing existing parish ministry.

Nationally it has been a failure. A report by Sir Robert Chote, the former head of the Office for Budget Responsibility, showed that “out of the 89,375 new disciples anticipated from SDF projects from 2014 to 2021, 12,704 have been witnessed to date”. £176 million was earmarked for these projects.

Wigan shows why this has been a disaster financially, but much more importantly, pastorally. The great scheme took the 29 parishes of Wigan and merged them into one super- benefice, made up of seven “parish hubs”. From 2013 the number of clergy was slashed from 24 to 18 and then to 13. They would merge back-office functions and train laity to take on clergy responsibilities.

The project had ambitious aims. By 2021 Wigan would have five new expressions of church, and five “emerging” expressions of church. They would have increased giving by £500,000. Congregations would be growing in these new forms of church, while the existing parishioners were expected to sit tight and keep giving.

It doesn't take a genius to work out what happened. The people walked and took their money with them.

If you slash the number of clergy and the consequential number of services, and remove priests from a direct pastoral relationship with specific congregations, those congregations will feel sufficiently abandoned by the

church that they will abandon the church in turn. Instead of bringing in an extra £500,000 a year, they have actually lost £500,000 a year. Slow hand clap.

And it's about to get worse. In the wake of the report, the Diocese of Liverpool announced a plan to close 19 of its 29 churches. With the fall in numbers and giving, they cannot afford to keep them open, they say.

What they don't mention is that this was always one of the objects of the C of E's original plan: "Deal with the "buildings issue", namely our understanding of a church which is overly reliant on expensive buildings which are unfit for twenty-first century mission and ministry.

"Configure the deanery around viable missional units fit for future purpose, each of which reflects a clear mixed economy of church."

As you can see, they always planned to close these churches for purely ideological reasons. Now they are going to blame the poor folk of Wigan for plans already in train which they have objected to from the start. "Punishment beatings shall continue until morale improves."

Morale will not improve. There is no plan to row back, apologise to people who feel deeply wounded and work out a better model of resourcing our poorest areas.

On the contrary, in the report they highlighted as a "key learning" that "traditionalists and older people feel sidelined" and proposed as a solution, "intergenerational activities/services with older and young people (e.g. technology sessions, ballroom dancing, handicrafts)". They asked for Communion and were given a handicraft session.

There are two overlapping issues here. The first is the belief that a place like Wigan, which has never recovered from the collapse of its mills and mining industry, must pay its own way or lose its churches and its priests. As a national church this is unconscionable.

Of course the poorer areas of the country cannot afford to pay for themselves. That is why Queen Anne set up her bounty to fund the cure of souls in poorer parishes. That money is currently paying £150 million a year towards projects that have been shown not to work. Give it back to the parishes and stop this cycle of decline.

The other issue is the ideological drive to transform the Church of England into a style of church developed for other denominations in other nations, most especially the United States. For that to be resisted, we need to show that the older Anglican model particular to England still has life in it. But for that, when we ask for Bread we need to be given more than handicraft.

*(This article is taken from the November 2023 issue of The Critic.)*

## Saint of the month

*St. Bibiana Virgin & Martyr - Patron Saint of hangovers... (2 December)*



While St. Bibiana is Patron Saint of various conditions—epilepsy, headaches, mental illness, victims of torture, and single women—certainly most fascinating of her titles is being the Patron Saint of Drunks and Hangovers... even if only by accident.

The earliest mention of St. Bibiana comes from an authentic, historical book, “Liber Pontificalis.” It states that the body of a Roman Virgin and Martyr named Bibiana was in a Basilica bearing her name. The Basilica of Santa Bibiana still exists today. This is really all we know for sure, the rest is based on tradition.

St. Bibiana suffered in the persecution started by Apronianus, Governor of Rome. She was the daughter of Christians, Flavian a Roman knight, and Dafrosa his wife. Flavian was tortured severely, and was sent into exile where he died from his wounds. His wife was beheaded, and their two daughters, Bibiana and Demetria, were stripped of their possessions and left to suffer. They did remain in their house, spending their time in prayer and fasting.

It became apparent to Apronianus, that hunger and want had little effect on these two girls. He had them brought to him, and Demetria, after confessing her faith, fell dead at the feet of the tyrant. St. Bibiana was placed in the hands of a wicked woman, called Rufina, for greater suffering. She tried to seduce her, using blows and beatings, as well as persuasion, but the Christian virgin remained faithful. Enraged, Apronianus ordered her to be tied to a pillar, beaten with scourges, laden with lead plummets, until she died. She endured the torments with joy, and died under the blows of her beating. Her body was then left for the dogs, but none would touch her. Two days later she was buried.

How did this teetotaling prodigy of chastity and Christian zealotry become the patron saint of hangovers?

It is said that upon her burial “mysterious and magical herbs” grew up around her grave and that it was these herbs that worked the miracles. In the Middle Ages pilgrims to the holy site of the Basilica Santa Bibiana would scrape dust from its columns and eat it which worked the same hangover magic as the original herbs did. Some, heretics no doubt, say the whole thing is nothing more than a harmless little play on words, Bibilus which means “to be fond of drinking” morphs into Bibiana.

In any case Santa Bibiana has found her way onto several top saints lists. She has been named the third most “useful” saint for Irish people and the sixth “most unusual saint.” Let’s face it, it’s hard to out-unusual the likes of St. Mangus of Fusson, the patron saint of caterpillars, or St. Hubert of Liege who protects us from werewolves.

We all agree, I hope, that it would un-Christian and certainly unwise to test St. Bibiana’s efficacy by getting a hangover just to see how much of a difference her intercession makes on throbbing head and sensitive



eyes... May her intercession and her splendid example of Christian chastity and modesty prevent rather than cure hangovers. Indeed, perhaps we should always toast with these words: “*Through the intercession of St. Bibiana, may we never need the intercession of St. Bibiana.*”

*O God, the giver of all good gifts, in Your servant Bibiana You joined the flower of virginity with the palm of martyrdom; be pleased, by her intercession, to join our souls by charity to You, so that all dangers being removed, we may obtain our eternal reward. Amen.*

*Dear Saint Bibiana, through your fasting and prayer you were given the grace to endure suffering and torment at the hands of your persecutors. Intercede for us, dear saint, that we also remember that our Lord is always there to strengthen us and give us the grace to persevere. Amen.*

## The Psalms

### *Psalm 32: The forgiveness of sins*

This favourite psalm of St. Augustine of Hippo is the second of the seven penitential psalms—even if the main theme of the psalm is thanksgiving. The psalmist, David presumably, tried to hide his sin from God and it only caused affliction in his heart. This agony did not leave him until he made a sincere confession. Now, freed and renewed through God’s forgiving grace, he warns others: they should not resist out of sheer obstinacy God’s grace but humbly confess their sins and turn to God who is full of mercy.

**Verses 1-2** — The psalm opens with two “beatitudes” and, deeply linked to them, with no less than three repetitions of the forgiveness of sins. Thus, not only the reality of sin is stressed but also the significance of the possibility of forgiveness of sin.

These two first verses make Psalm 32 of the greatest importance for modern man. Today we are tempted to ignore, or outright to deny, the gravity of sin and its serious consequences both for the individual and society. The Collect of the Feast of Christ the King still resounds in our ears: it is sin that “tear asunder” the family of nations. But, most tragically, how could sin be ever forgiven and its consequences healed if we ignore the reality of sin?!

The relationship of man with God is only possible on the foundation of complete truthfulness. Sin and its denial destroy this truthfulness. All this does not mean that we must be sinless to have a meaningful relationship with God: that would be impossible for us anyway... What it means is that we must be absolutely truthful with God and humbly and honestly admit our sins. If we do so, God will restore and heal the personal relationship between him and each one of us every time.

As we are heading towards the holy season of Advent, we should read and receive Psalm 32 as a strong call to the Sacrament of Penance (Confession).

**Verses 3-4** — These verses are witnesses of the inner struggle of an unrepentant heart, its inability to heal without the truthful confession of sin. David even considered to abandon his duties and hide from God but there is no hiding from Him. As long as he was in denial about his own sins, there was no peace in David’s heart. His soul is eaten up with worry and consumed by a burning heat. He may have silenced his tongue but he cannot silence his conscience. Sudden terror torments him daily. And so—what an audacity!—he tries to flee from God: a creature, consumed with fear and anguish, is



trying to free himself by attempting to shake off God's hand which is upon him.

As the psalmist himself now knows, it takes courage and self-conquest to admit to sin both before God and before one's own self. Penitence, indeed, is a virtue—a good habit, that is, practiced with perseverance over time. The penitential days and seasons of the Church—such as Ember days, Advent, Septuagesima-tide, Lent, and Fridays more generally—are not in place for their own sake but to create and deepen in us the spirit of truthful penitence; a spirit, as we have just seen, without which there cannot be any personal relationship between God and us.

**Verses 5-7** — Just as Isaiah did at the moment of his calling so we all, when we find ourself in God's presence, must acknowledge our sinfulness: "*Woe is me! For I am lost!*" (Is 6,5). However, this act of recognising and admitting our sins is not the beginning of a descend into darkness, sadness, or separation from God. On the contrary, as we saw above, it is the only lasting foundation for our relationship with God. It is the beginning of the only life worth living: united to God through truth and penance.

Finally, in the psalmist's soul God and truth have won the victory. David now feels that he is relieved of a burden that pressed heavily upon him and tormented him; now peace has entered his soul, and he can again freely lift up his eyes to his God.

Finally, the psalmist is free from any trouble, affliction, or danger because God let himself to be found again. His delight in God has transformed him completely; when he comes to think of his deliverance from the agony of sin, he rejoices in his heart and is no longer afraid, no matter what the future may hold in store for him. Thus, the first part of Psalm 32 resounds with the utter happiness of a man whose sins are forgiven.

**Verses 8-11** — David now turns to us, his fellow-worshippers of the one God, and wants to spare us the bitter experience of his own struggle. He uses the parable of a foolish horse or mule. The parallel is not only true when we consider our (occasional?) obstinacy and blind self-will but also in the necessity of applying force. Often, we leave no choice to God but for him to use "force" (hardship, trials, struggles...) to bring us back to Him in truth and penance.

Psalm 32 starts and ends with the delight of man in his God. This delight—and not material possessions, not self-will, not sin—that is the true goal of everyone who is above the understanding of a foolish horse or mule. But this delight (God!) can only be reached through truth and penance!

## Catechism

*For adults—On Confession (continued)*

**218. Why does the priest give us a penance after confession?** *The priest gives us a penance after confession, that we may satisfy God (his justice) for the temporal punishment due to our sins.*

“Penance.” The penance the priest gives may not fully satisfy justice, but shows by our accepting it that we are willing to do penance. What, for example, is a penance of five “Our Fathers” compared with the guilt of one mortal sin, for which we would have to suffer in Hell for all eternity? Then think of the penances performed by the Christians many centuries ago, in the early ages of the Church. There were four stages of penance. The churches were divided into four parts by railings and gates. The first railing across the church was at some distance from the altar, the second was a little below the middle of the church, and the third was near the door. Those who committed great sins had to stand clad in coarse garments near the entrance of the church, and beg the prayers of those who entered. After they had done this kind of penance for a certain time, they were allowed to come into the church as far as the second railing. They were allowed to hear the sermon, but were not permitted to be present at the Mass. After doing sufficient penance, they were allowed to remain for Mass, but could not receive Holy Communion. When they had performed all the penance imposed upon them, they were allowed to receive the Sacraments and enjoy all the rights and privileges of faithful children of the Church. These penances lasted for many days and sometimes for years, according to the gravity of the sins committed. The sins for which these severe penances were performed were generally sins that had been committed publicly, and hence the penance, amendment, and reparation had also to be public.

“Temporal Punishment.” Every sin has two punishments attached to it, one called the eternal and the other the temporal. Now, when we sin against God we in the first place insult Him, and secondly rob Him of what is deservedly His due; namely, the worship, respect, obedience, love, etc., that we owe Him as our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. In the Sacrament of Penance God forgives the insult offered by sinning, but requires us to make restitution for that of which the sin has deprived Him. We make this restitution by our penances upon earth or by our suffering in Purgatory, or by both combined. The penances performed upon earth are very acceptable and pleasing to God; and hence we should be most anxious to do penance here that we may have less to suffer in Purgatory. Therefore, after performing the penance the priest gives you in the confessional, it is wise to impose upon

yourself other light penances in keeping with your age and condition, but never undertake severe penances or make religious vows and promises without consulting your confessor.

If you forget to say your penance, your confession is not on that account worthless; but as the penance is one of the parts of the Sacrament, namely, the satisfaction, you should say it as soon as possible, and in the manner your confessor directs. If you cannot perform the penance imposed by your confessor, you should inform him of that fact, and ask him to give you another in its stead.

**219. Does not the Sacrament of Penance remit all punishment due to sin?** *The Sacrament of Penance remits the eternal punishment due to sin, but it does not always remit the temporal punishment which God requires as satisfaction for our sins.*

**221. Which are the chief means by which we satisfy God for the temporal punishment due to sin?** *The chief means by which we satisfy God for the temporal punishment due to sin are: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, all spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and the patient suffering of the ills of life.*

“Spiritual” works of mercy are those good works we do for persons' souls. “Corporal” works of mercy are those we do for their bodies.

**222. Which are the chief spiritual works of mercy?** *The chief spiritual works of mercy are seven: to admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead.*

**223. Which are the chief corporal works of mercy?** *The chief corporal works of mercy are seven: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive, to harbour the harbourless, to visit the sick, and to bury the dead.*

“To harbour”—that is, to give one who has no home a place of rest. A harbour is an inlet of the ocean where ships can rest and be out of danger; so we can also call the home or place of rest given to the homeless a harbour. “Sick,” especially the sick poor and those who have no friends.

All Christians are bound to perform these works of mercy in one way or another. We have been relieved to some extent of doing the work ourselves by the establishment of institutions where these things are attended to by communities. But if these good religious do the work for us, we are obliged on our part to give them the means to carry it on. Therefore we should contribute according to our means to charitable institutions, and indeed to all institutions that promote the glory of God and the good of our religion.

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## 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! For service times and other information about our churches and services (including weddings and funerals), please visit our website:

[www.stpaulsweymouth.org](http://www.stpaulsweymouth.org)