

THE ORATORY—dedicated to THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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Registered as a Charity

Parish Weekly Newsletter

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This newsletter is available in large-print format. Ask at the Sacristy.

December 23rd 2007: The Fourth Sunday of Advent



ST JOSEPH AND OUR LADY

Each year on this last Sunday of Advent, the Gospel focuses on our Blessed Lady as she awaits the moment when she will bring forth the Son of God into the world. Today we hear St. Matthew's account of God's message to Joseph to reassure him that his fiancée's child is miraculously conceived by God. Joseph not only accepts this message, but understands it to be an instruction from God that he should take Mary as his wife, and so he "took her to his own home". Our Lady, who shields and nurtures God's Son in her womb in those nine months from His conception until His birth, herself needs protection. This role is given by God to St. Joseph who willingly takes on himself the care both of Mary and of her holy child.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH—HOPE IS BORN

On Christmas Day we celebrate the appearance on earth of God in our human nature. This is the "miracle of the Incarnation". For by becoming man, Jesus did not in any way cease to be God. Only insofar as He hid His glory and lived in great humility did He seem to disguise His Godhead. Yet even so we believe that to all those who accept Him in faith as the Son of God, Jesus reveals Himself as God—not yet in His full majesty and glory, but as the living sign of hope to the world in darkness. Christmas is celebrated in the darkness of the year in order to remind us that Christ has conquered darkness. For the darkness of the world around us in midwinter is a symbol of the inner darkness of our hearts and minds caused by sin. Only Christ can take that away from us—only He can enlighten us.

The best-loved Christmas Mass is, not surprisingly, the Midnight Mass, because it is the one that most seems to express the wonder of Christmas—the paradox of darkness and night-time which is shattered by the strange and wonderful light of the stable at Bethlehem. This light in the darkness also speaks to our innermost hearts of the hope that shatters the darkness of sin and despair. Even though human sorrow, which is no less real for so many at this time of the year, is not taken away, it is nonetheless lightened by the hope that Christ brings with Him at His coming. When Mary sees the face of God, her Son, for the first time, she rejoices beyond all human rejoicing in the history of the world, and she shares her joy with all those who come to her at Christmas time and pray for her help.

CHRISTMAS JOY—CONFESSION AND THE CRIB

Yet the "magic" of that holy midnight can remain with us if we want. We must prepare a place in our hearts and souls for Christ by making a good preparation for the feast. This requires a good and thorough confession. If we wish Christ to come into our hearts and Mary to share with us her joy at the birth of her Son, then we must empty our hearts of all the rubbish of sin and selfishness which leave no room for Him to enter. Just as Mary and Joseph found no room in the comfortable inn, but only in the poor stable for Christ to be born there, so too Christ will be born in us only if we are poor and humble of heart. If we want the joy of Christmas and its true meaning to fill the whole of this holy season, then give the Christmas Crib pride of place among all your decorations at home. Make a daily prayer before it, asking Mary to bring her Son into your heart and life, not just at Christmas but at all times. And remember the Christmas Crib collection here at Church, which we will be giving to those among us who, like Mary and Joseph at the first Christmas, find themselves far from home and in great need of help and comfort. God bless you all!



Sunday December 23rd: The Fourth Sunday of Advent (Purple)

Year 1 or A of the Lectionary at Mass

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| • 8.30 a.m. Low Mass | • 12.45 p.m. Tridentine Mass (in the Cloister Chapel) |
| • 10.30 a.m. Solemn High Mass | • 5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass |
| • 12.00 p.m. (Families with young children) | • Vespers and Benediction at 7.30 p.m. |

The CHRISTMAS SEASON: Liturgical Calendar

PLEASE SEE OVERLEAF

Confessions are heard from 12.30 p.m. and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass

Monday December 24th: Christmas Eve : Mass at 7.30 a.m. and 12.45 p.m.

SOLEMNITY OF CHRISTMAS

Monday December 24th continued:

- **CONFESSIONS** will be heard all day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- **5.00 p.m.** “Tridentine” Mass of Christmas Midnight: in the Cloister Chapel (*fulfilling the Christmas Day Obligation*)
- **6.00 p.m.** “VIGIL MASS” of Christmas: (*fulfilling the Christmas Day Obligation*)
- **11.15 p.m.** CAROLS followed by MIDNIGHT MASS at 12 Midnight

Tuesday December 25th: Christmas Day : Holyday of Obligation (White)

- **MASS TIMES**
- (Low) Mass at 8.00, 9.00, 10.00 a.m.
- (Tridentine: 9.30 a.m. Cloister Chapel)
- **SOLEMN HIGH MASS at 11.00 a.m.**
- **Final (Low) Mass at 12.30 p.m.**
- **SOLEMN BENEDICTION at 5.30 p.m.**

Wednesday December 26th: St Stephen, The First Martyr. Feast. (Red)

- **BANK HOLIDAY: MASS at 8 and 11 a.m. only**
- **No Evening Devotions**

St Stephen (1st c.) One of the first (seven) deacons chosen by the Apostles, Stephen was a renowned preacher but he was so successful that he was brought before the Sanhedrin. He gave impressive witness to Our Lord's Divinity and, as a consequence, was sentenced to death by stoning. He was the first person to die for the Faith.

Thursday December 27th: St John, Apostle & Evangelist, Feast. (White)

St John (1st c.), the Evangelist, was the brother of James, and with St Peter, witnessed the Transfiguration. He was known as “the Beloved Disciple” and was particularly close to Our Lord due to his purity of heart, and understanding of Our Lord as God. For this reason, he is also known as “*The Divine*”, i.e. Theologian. He was chosen by Our Lord to care for Our Lady after the Crucifixion.

Friday December 28th: The Holy Innocents, martyrs. Feast. (Red)

- **All night Vigil commencing at 10 p.m. (Cloister Chapel) See below.**

The Holy Innocents (1st c.) We commemorate the children ordered by Herod to be murdered, due to his fear and hatred of Our Lord.

Saturday December 29th: fifth Day within the Octave of Christmas. (White).

Optional memoria of St Thomas à Becket, Priest & Martyr. (Red)

- **Mass at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.**
- **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m.**
- **Benediction at 10.45 a.m.**
- **Confessions from 10.55 a.m. to 12 noon & from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass**
- **Vigil Mass of THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY at 5.45 p.m.**

St Thomas à Becket (d. 1170) He was a London-born Norman who became Chancellor of England, and a friend and advisor to Henry II. Thinking it politically expedient, Henry appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury, but once in office, Thomas shunned worldly pursuits and strongly defended the Church over the State causing serious arguments with the King. He was martyred by four of Henry's in Canterbury Cathedral.

Sunday December 30th: The FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY (White)

Mass & Service Times:

- **8.30 a.m. Low Mass**
- **9.30 a.m. Latin Mass 1962 Missal—Sunday within the Octave of Christmas— (Please note new time)**
- **10.30 a.m. High Mass**
- **12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)**
- **5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass in English**
- **Vespers and Benediction: 7.30 p.m.**

Please pray for the sick Marie-Thérèse Jones, Nellie Cowan, Ingaborg Willis, Margaret Walshe, Barry Whelan, George Saunders, Margaret Casey, Jacqueline Griffiths, Desmond Williams and Kerry Mooney. **Of your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died recently:** Denis Riches and Michael Maguire; **and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now:** Fr Francis Etherington of this Oratory, Fr Gerard Sugden, Bill Chavasse, Michael Rohan, Maureen Dwyer, Nell Carter, Donal Burke, Maud Heron, Russell Roebuck and Thomas Cunningham.

The following are requested to read next weekend, December 29th /30th: The Feast of the Holy Family

Saturday 5.45 p.m.: Jenni Hardwick
Sunday 8.30 a.m.: Murray Wilson-Browne
12.00 p.m.: Dennis Wood
5.30 p.m.: Jason Mahoney

Third Sunday of Advent, 16th December:
Offertory: £1,495
Second: Poor families in our parish: £1,221
Many thanks

The second Collection today will be for our music fund.

The second collection at Christmas Masses will be the offering for the Oratory Fathers at Christmas.

The Crib Collection is for the homeless and destitute of our city, see Notices below.

TODAY

The CHRISTMAS DRAW : PLEASE TAKE AND SELL AS MANY TICKETS AS YOU CAN—they are selling slowly at the moment. Tickets are available at the doors of the church. There are many excellent prizes, including a first prize of £500. Stubs and money can be handed in the Oratory House or at the sacristy (preferably in an envelope marked ‘Christmas Draw’) (Tickets: £1 per book or 20p each.) **The draw will be made after the 11 a.m. Mass on Saturday, January 5th.**

The NEW CATHOLIC DIRECTORY IS ON SALE at the piety stall (in the Lower Cloister Hall) together with Christmas cards, Calendars, diaries, books etc.

THIS WEEK

The SECOND COLLECTION AT CHRISTMAS MASSES will be the offering for the Fathers

The CRIB COLLECTION THIS YEAR will be for Asylum seekers and the homeless of Birmingham.

ADORATION AT REDNAL is suspended until after the New Year.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1962 “Tridentine” MASS: please note that the Sunday Mass time and venue are both changing from next Sunday, 30th December: it will be at 9.30 a.m. in Church for an experimental period.

NEW YEAR'S EVE VIGIL: making plans for New Year's Eve? Why not consider seeing in the New Year with Our Lord? Exposition from 9.30 p.m. with prayers (as requested by Our Lady of Fatima) for World peace, the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins against her Immaculate Heart. Mass of the Solemnity of the Mother of God will be at 11.45 p.m. Refreshments will be served after Mass.

The ANNUAL PRO-LIFE VIGIL of the Feast of the Holy Innocents, will take place in the Cloister Chapel commencing at 10 p.m. on Thursday, 27th December and ending with Holy Mass at 6 a.m. on Friday 28th.

NOTICES

CRIB COLLECTION this year's collection will go to the Sisters of St. Paul Mission to destitute asylum seekers in this city.

APF RED BOXES: The quarter will come to the end on 31st December, so box holders will be contacted soon by their collectors to arrange for exchange of boxes.