

THE ORATORY—dedicated to THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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Registered as a Charity

Parish Weekly Newsletter

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December 12th 2010: THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT *Gaudete!*

PREPARING A WAY FOR THE LORD



Last Sunday we heard St. John the Baptist proclaiming with great urgency and clarity: *'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight'*. His preaching was uncompromising. When the Pharisees came to him for baptism he did not mince his words: *'You brood of vipers!... Do not presume to tell yourselves 'we are sons of Abraham'. For God can raise children to Abraham even from stones'*

He then told them that the *"axe was laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire."* Yet he insisted that he was only the forerunner. There was one coming after him: *"whose sandals he was not fit to carry"*, who would be even stricter than himself: *"I baptise you with water...but the one who follows me is more powerful than I: He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire...He will clear His threshing-floor and gather His wheat into the barn; but the chaff He will burn in a fire that will never go out!"*

John knew that he was the forerunner. Therefore, he thought, the One whose way he was preparing would be like himself, only more so. As John was stern and strict, so the Messiah who came after him would be sterner and stricter, and even more uncompromising.

Today's Gospel reading moves forward to a much later date. By now some time has passed since John pointed Jesus out as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world"*. At the point where today's Gospel begins, John had been imprisoned for speaking out against the king's immoral life, and would shortly be executed. Yet he now seemed at this late stage to question what Our Lord was doing, since we hear that he has sent his disciples to ask Jesus: *"Are you the One who is to come, or must we still wait for Another?"*

Our Lord's answer is to tell John's disciples to go back to their master and *"tell him what they hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised to life and the Gospel is proclaimed to all the poor—and blessed is the one who does not lose faith in me."* All of which takes us back to the First Reading today, from the Prophet Isaiah, who prophesies that these things will be the sign of the Messiah—the sign of new life and of joy. It is this meeting of life restored with joy that gives this Sunday its name, from the first word of the entrance Antiphon: *"Rejoice!"* which is in Latin: *"Gaudete!"*

We may wonder why John asks the question *"Are you the one we are waiting for?"* Is he now doubting his earlier conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, the One whose coming he had announced? Is he concerned that Jesus is not as forthright as he, John, had expected? This is unlikely, though it is possible that some of John's followers were puzzled about Our Lord's deeds. It is therefore likely that John sent them to Jesus for Him to reassure them of the truth which he did not doubt. John knew that Jesus was the Saviour, but he needed his own followers to learn from Jesus in person that He was fulfilling the prophecies of old.

O COME!

Friday sees the beginning of the final liturgical countdown to Christmas Day. Each evening at Vespers a special Antiphon is sung before Our Lady's "Magnificat" which forms the high point of the service. These Antiphons all begin and end in the same way. They begin by calling on our Saviour ("O...") adding one of His titles from the Prophets, going on to describe some special aspect of the title, before ending with a cry of earnest longing: *"Come!"* We are including the whole series on their proper days on this and next week's newsletters. You may recognise them as the foundation of the famous Advent hymn *"O come, o come, Emmanuel!"* and those who come to the early morning weekday Masses will recognise them from Blessed John Henry's prayers which begin the hour of adoration. For a full account of the "O" Antiphons, come to Fr. Anton's Advent Talk next Saturday morning!

Sunday December 12th: The Third Sunday of Advent (Rose)

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| • 8.30 a.m. Low Mass | • 12.00 p.m. (Families with young children) |
| • 9.30 a.m. Latin Low Mass—1962 Missal | • 5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational English Mass |
| • 10.30 a.m. High Mass | • 6.30 p.m. Vespers and Benediction |

Liturgical Calendar

Year 1 of the Lectionary at Weekday Mass and Psalter Week 3 in the Divine Office

Monday to Friday: Masses at 7.30 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m. Rosary after the 12.45 & 5.45 p.m. Masses.

Holy Hour: Each morning from 8 a.m. - 9 a.m.

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

(For Saturday and Sunday: see over)

Monday 13th December: St Lucy, Virgin & Martyr. (Red)

- **Holy Hour 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. ? Rosary after the 12.45 Mass and 5.45 Mass**
- **Blessing with St Philip's relic after evening Rosary**

St Lucy (d.304) Mentioned in the Roman Canon, she suffered martyrdom in the last and greatest persecution of the early Church under the Emperor Diocletian. Legend has it that her eyes were put out and so she is the patron of those who suffer from eye complaints.

Tuesday 14th December: St John of the Cross, Priest & Doctor of the Church. Memoria. (White)

- **Holy Hour 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. ? Rosary after 12.45 Mass and 5.45 Mass**
- **Benediction at 8 p.m.**

St John of the Cross (1542–91) He became a Carmelite under the influence of St Teresa of Avila and assisted her in reforming the Order in its return to a life of prayer. He was also her confessor. In the last years of his life, he suffered greatly physically, and also through misunderstanding and humiliation. His great mystical works include *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night of the Soul* and *The Spiritual Canticle* which apart from being masterpieces of Spanish literature, contain a thorough exposition of Catholic mysticism.

Wednesday 15th December: Wednesday of Advent Week 3. (Purple) Blessed Anthony Grassi, Oratorian Priest. Memoria. (White)

- **Holy Hour 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. ? Rosary after 12.45 and 5.45 Mass**
- **Sung Mass at 5.45 p.m.**

Blessed Anthony Grassi (1592–1671) He joined the Oratory at only 17 and was a fine student. When 29, he was struck by lightning whilst praying at the Holy House of Loreto and was expected to die. Thereafter, he dedicated his life totally to his work as a priest. He was a renowned confessor, counsellor and mediator. As Provost of Fermo Oratory, he was gentle but insisted that all his fellow priests of the Community adhered to the Constitutions

Thursday 16th December: Thursday of Advent Week 3. (Purple).

- **Holy Hour 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. ? Rosary after 12.45 and 5.45 Mass**

Friday 17th December: Weekday of Advent 17th December (Purple)

‘O Sapientia’: O Wisdom who come forth from the Mouth of the Most High; reaching from end to end and powerfully ordering all things; Come! And teach us the way of prudence

- **Holy Hour 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. ? Rosary after 12.45 and 5.45 Mass**

Saturday 18th December: Weekday of Advent 18th December (Purple)

‘O Adonai’: O Mighty Lord and leader of the House of Israel, Who appeared to Moses in the flame of the burning bush, and gave him the Law on Mount Sinai; Come! And redeem us with outstretched arm.

- **“Rorate” Sung Mass by candlelight (Latin OF) in the Shrine at 6.30 a.m.**
- **Low Masses: at 8 a.m., and in Latin (EF) at 9.30 a.m. in the Shrine.**
- **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30—concluding with Benediction at 10.45 a.m.**
- **Pilgrim Mass at 11 a.m. followed by prayers in Bl. John Henry’s Shrine.**
- **Confessions from 11 a.m. to 12 noon & from 5.30 p.m.**
- **First Mass of Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Advent) at 5.30 p.m.**

December 19th: The Fourth Sunday of Advent: (Purple)

Mass & Service Times:

- **8.30 a.m. Low Mass**
- **9.30 a.m. Low Latin Mass (1962 missal)**
- **10.30 a.m. Solemn High Mass**
- **12.00 noon Family Mass**
- **5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational English Mass**
- **6.30 p.m. Solemn Vespers and Benediction (please note new time)**

Please pray for the sick May Colqhoun, Yvonne and Louise Pilsbury, Harvey Mackenzie, Elizabeth Priday, James Foynes, Tony Colqhoun, Miles Drew, Carolyn Knight, Wendy Eddy, Leroy McCoy, John, Michael and Philip McCann and Brenda Molloy.

Of your charity please pray for those who have died recently:

and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now: Pearl Harper, Lucy Hood-Phillips, Clare Thomas, Michael Berg, Patrick McLarnon, Ingeborg Willis, Thomas McAlinden and James Colqhoun.

The following are requested to read at Mass next weekend, December 18th/19th The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Saturday 5.30 p.m.: Jenni Hardwick
Sunday 8.30 a.m.: Murray Wilson-Browne
12.00 p.m.: Morag Marinoni
5.30 p.m.: Jason Mahoney

Collections last week:

Second Sunday of Advent: 5th December, 2010

Offertory: £1,368

Second Collection: Poor Parishes of the Diocese :
£1,160

Many thanks

TODAY

The SECOND COLLECTION will be for the poor of our own parish.

LONDON ORATORY CAROL SERVICE: There are a few seats left on the coach to the Carol Service at the London Oratory on Wednesday 22nd December. Fr Ignatius Harrison, Provost of the London Oratory, will reserve front rows seats for us. There will be time also to visit the shops. The coach will leave Plough & Harrow Road at 10 a.m. and leave London, after the Carol Service, between 9 & 10 p.m., arriving home approximately 2.5 hours later. The cost for the coach will be £15. **Booking forms are to be found at the doors of the church and would be grateful if you would return your application by the end of today or, at the latest, tomorrow, Monday, 13th.**

RELIGIOUS CHRISTMAS POSTAGE STAMPS are on sale at the PIETY STALL (open all day on Saturdays from 10.00 a.m., after all Sunday morning Masses and on Sunday afternoons) and **Christmas cards Nativity sets, calendars, diaries and other Christmas items** together with books, DVDs and CDs. There are also commemorative items of Bl. John Henry and books about and by him. **The Light of the World, the recent interview with Pope Benedict by Peter Seewald, is now in stock.** (Gift vouchers are also available). (Please remember, you help to support the Oratory by using our shop.)

THIS WEEK

There will be a HOLY HOUR from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. each day this week, and Adoration from 8.30 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. on Saturday.

“RORATE” MASS: There is an ancient and beautiful custom originating in Middle Europe of singing a very early morning Mass by candlelight during Advent, called by the first word of the Entrance Antiphon in Latin, “Rorate”. We will celebrate our own *Rorate* Mass on **Saturday 18th December at 6.30 a.m.** in Blessed John Henry’s shrine.

Our ADVENT TALKS, held in the Lower Cloister Hall, end on Saturday the 18th, immediately after the Prayers in the Shrine following the 11 a.m. Mass (i.e. about 12.15 p.m.). The final talk will be given by Fr Anton on the “O” Antiphons.

CHRISTMAS PANTO & PARTY on Wednesday 15 December from 1.30 p.m. “We would like to invite you to join us for festive food and drink, Father Christmas, Bingo, good company and a great fun-filled afternoon”. Please call Sheila Pellowe on 0121 454 0895 a.s.a.p. if you would like to attend.

BIRMINGHAM ART GALLERY is now running two exhibitions of particular interest: **PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE POPE’S VISIT TO BIRMINGHAM** in Gallery 28 until 30th January, and **THE “NATIVITY” TRAIL**, paintings depicting Our Lord’s birth, until January 9th. Admission is free.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

NEW YEAR’S EVE VIGIL: Please join our New Year celebrations by attending our Vigil: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will commence at 9.30 p.m. with prayers, as requested by Our Lady of Fatima, for peace, the conversion of sinners and reparation for the sins against her Immaculate Heart. (Low) Mass of the Solemnity of the Mother of God (January 1st) will be at 11.45 p.m. Refreshments will be served after Mass.

NOTICES

IMPORTANT NOTICE: MASSES AT CHRISTMASTIDE: Please remember that we have the duty to be at Mass both on Holydays and Sundays. Christmas Day, which falls on a Saturday, is a Holyday. Therefore, you must attend Mass also on Sunday 26th (There will not be a Sunday Vigil Mass on Christmas Day); **ONE MASS CANNOT COUNT FOR BOTH DAYS! Please also note that if you miss any Sunday or Holyday Mass, except for a serious cause e.g. illness, you may not receive Holy Communion unless/ until you have been to confession.** **HOLY COMMUNION:** 1) The Church urges us to make a sign of reverence in receiving Communion. To fulfil this, please note that in this Church all those who *can* do so should receive Communion *kneeling down* at the Altar rails. 2) If you receive in the hand, please don’t leave the rails with the Host in your hand! Receive it reverently first, then rise. 3) Don’t forget that Communion may only be received by those who are in a state of grace and have been