



HOLY CROSS PRIORY CHURCH

SUNDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2017

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

· A ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH · THE DOMINICAN PRESENCE IN LEICESTER SINCE 1247 ·

A WORD FROM THE PRIOR ...

Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice! The familiar command on Gaudete Sunday, this Third Sunday of Advent, is that joyful command to rejoice. We are encouraged to make our preparations with joy, and to seek the face of Christ with hopeful longing, knowing and experiencing the fruits of our salvation.

There's no getting away from the fact that the time around Christmas is not so joyful for many of our families. Perhaps money will be spent that people do not have; there are problems with addiction and depression; relationships can become complicated. Sometimes, loneliness and the absence of loved ones is more keenly felt at this dark time of the year.

Our role as a parish community is to inspire hope in others. We can do this by heeding the command to rejoice and repent, and help to lighten each other's burdens. Advent is a great opportunity to do this. The Carol Service later today will be a wonderful time for us to sing our favourite Christmas Carols together, and a great opportunity to welcome friends to Holy Cross who might not otherwise come. It would also be nice to see those who will be away for Christmas. I hope to see you there.

Be intent on prayer, and whatever may happen will turn to our good.

Fr David

ADVENT MARKET – THANK YOU – A HUGE SUCCESS

The last few weeks have been busy with all the build-up and preparations. We were so pleased to learn that the total for the Advent Market came to £5,876.30. That is a huge achievement, and we hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in putting those funds to good use. **Over the last four years, we have raised almost £40,000 through the Advent and Blackfriars Market.** This has had a huge impact on our ability to transform and repair our aging buildings. We still have a long way to go, but we're achieving it together. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered for the intentions of our friends and benefactors for the Advent Market.

HOLY CROSS CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE – 17 DECEMBER @ 4:30PM

We invite you to join us today for this special Carol Service just before Christmas. It is an opportunity to bring your friends to church, and to welcome people who might not be frequent visitors to our beautiful church. Please wear Christmas jumpers, and afterwards there will be wine and mince pies.

CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS AT HOLY CROSS

Details are now available for all our Christmas Masses, etc.

MASS TIMES THIS WEEK

Please note there will be no 8am Mass on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

NOTICE BOARD

BAPTISM PREPARATION

If you wish to have your child baptised, please attend one of our baptism preparation sessions. The next is Sunday 5 November after the 10:30am Mass in St Clement's Hall.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION CONFIRMATION

Please get in touch with the Priory Office if members of your family wish to celebrate these sacraments.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Couples who are preparing for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony should make an appointment with the Parish Priest in the first instance.

BECOMING CATHOLIC

Any adult who wishes to become a Catholic or receive Confirmation should join our RCIA programme, which begins in the Autumn Term.

VISITING THE SICK

The Faithful who are sick and housebound can arrange a visit from a priest or special minister by calling 0116 252 1501.

FAMILY VISITS

Families who would like a house blessing or a pastoral visit at home, can make arrangements by calling 0116 252 1501

CHRISTMAS EVE SUN 24TH DECEMBER, 6.15PM MASS CHILDREN'S NATIVITY PLAY

All children are welcome to join in the Nativity Play which takes place during the 6.15 Mass on Christmas Eve. They can either be angels, shepherds or pages of the kings. We will have some costumes for 5 – 6 year olds but please will you bring something suitable if the child is bigger than this, homemade costumes are fine – no need to buy them. Please bring all children to St Clements Hall by 5.30 if they need costumes or 5.45 if they are already in costume. We will need parents to supervise their own children during the play, so adults are welcome to dress up as if they lived in Bethlehem as well.

PARISH SOCIAL EVENTS

Social Group;

Every Tuesday: 6.30-8.00pm in St. Clement's Hall - a chance to de-stress and chat, with a bite to eat and drink; fun-bingo. Spread the word...

Please join us this Tuesday Dec 19 from 6.30pm for the 'Advent to Christmas' Social in St. Clement's Hall. Entry is free; we will enjoy some refreshments (including some mulled wine and seasonal treats) and there will be plenty of music to listen to and join in with if you wish. More detail from hcross.social@gmail.com

CHURCH LIGHTING – PROJECT PLANS

We have commissioned Mealey Electrical Contractors Ltd to install a new lighting system in the church, at a cost of £65,000. We are grateful for the generosity of so many of you that enables us to do this. Appropriate light fittings have been sourced and ordered, which will mean that installation will commence on 8 January 2018, and in plenty of time for the Diamond Jubilee of our Dedication in May of next year. During the works, there will be minimal disruption to our regular pattern of Masses and services. Many thanks for your co-operation, and for your ongoing generosity, which has enabled the project to take place..

OUR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Leicester Catholic Students – bringing together Catholic students from Leicester and De Montfort Universities. It's been a wonderful first term at both our universities, and we are really pleased to have met so many students, who are involving themselves in the life of our community. We wish you every blessing of the Christmas season as you return to your families.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Our Holy Hour, each Sunday at 6pm
- Carol Service, next Sunday at 4:30pm. Mince pies afterwards. Come along, wear Christmas jumpers, and bring your friends.

THE DOMINICAN COMMUNITY

Fr David Rocks OP PP *Prior*; Fr Isidore Clarke OP; Fr Fabian Radcliffe OP;
Fr Tony Rattigan OP *Bursar*; Fr Robert Gay OP CC *Subprior*; Fr Matthew Jarvis OP

Office Administrator: *Mrs Rachael Powell* – leicester.admin@english.op.org

Lay University Chaplain: *Mr George Ralph* – george.ralph@english.op.org

Director of Music: *Mr Thomas Keogh* – thomas@thomaskeogh.co.uk

For the Office Administrator, please call **0116 252 1501**

Holy Cross Priory, 45 Wellington Street, LE1 6HW. Tel: 0116 252 1501

For more details, visit: www.holycrossleicester.org

MASS TIMES

Sundays:

8am; 10:30am (sung);
12:30pm (old rite);
7pm

Weekdays:

8am (old rite);
12:30pm; 6:10pm

Saturdays:

8am (old rite);
10am; 12.30pm;
6:10pm Vigil Mass for Sunday

CONFESSION

Saturdays:

10:30-11:30am
5:00-6:00pm

MONEY MATTERS

Last week's collections:

£ 840.69

(Gift aided: £266.00)

Woodhouse Collection

£33.10

(Gift aided: £26.00)

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONTINUED SUPPORT!*

THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

1ST READING: ISAIAH 61:1-2A,10-11

Today's reading carries the words with which he presents himself to the discouraged and heartbroken Israelites. I was sent—he says—to give courage and hope to those who are disappointed, to bind up broken hearts, to bring good tidings to those who suffer, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to announce the year of the Lord's favour (vv. 1-2). He has no weapons, no money, no political power to impose. He has only *the word*; he is the bearer of a sure promise because it is formulated by God. The jubilee year has come, one in which "each one will recover his property" (Lev 25:10). No one must resign himself to live in misery and slavery. It is the time for the poor to lift his head and regain his own dignity.

2ND READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

We are at the end of the First Letter to the Thessalonians. Paul, before the greetings, introduces some concluding exhortations regarding community life. He recommends: "Rejoice always" (v. 16). Joy is one of the characteristic signs of the presence of God's Spirit in the human heart (Gal 5:22). It is easy to confuse it with pleasure, the pleasure of alcohol, drugs, immoral life. Paul tells the Thessalonians the source of true joy. It comes from prayer: "Pray without ceasing and give thanks" (v. 17-18). Joy is the result of the opening of the heart to the impulses of the Spirit who enriches the community with his gifts and is given by God to one who leads a blameless life (vv. 19-22). A community that takes into account these exhortations of the Apostle becomes "holy" (vv. 23-24), that is completely different from other groups, association or sects.

GOSPEL: MARK 1:1-8

At the end of the first century A.D., when John wrote his gospel, there were still many people who called themselves disciples of John the Baptist. They were heavily influenced by him as the supreme model of life, even in opposition to Jesus. That's why the evangelist pressed to clarify the position of the precursor vis-à-vis with Christ. The Baptist was not the light of the world. He was just the first to recognize "the true light that enlightens everyone" (Jn 1:9). He was not deceived by the flattery of those who, surprised by his teachings and admired his honesty, were convinced that he was the Messiah. He remained at his post, kept himself faithful to his mission. During Advent his testimony is proposed to us. As he did with his contemporaries, today he points out to all people the light of the world, Christ. Those who follow him will not walk in darkness, but will have life (Jn 8:12). His call is appropriate because the sparkles of the proposed deceptive life are countless and seductive. They glow but soon fade away and turn out to be slivers of death. Only the light of Christ indicates the true values, those on which one will never regret of having bet one's life.

NEXT SUNDAY – FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - (YEAR B)

"The splendour of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm. If every tiny flower wanted to be a rose, spring would lose its loveliness."

St Therese of Lisieux

"There is no surer means of calling down God's blessing upon the family than the daily recitation of the Rosary."

Pope Pius XII

THE WORD AT WORK: OUR WEEKLY REFLECTION

WORDS ABOUT THE WORD

Fr Robert Eccles ponders on the grace of preaching and the power of words.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness...
The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring forth before all the nations.

Isaiah 61.10-11

Is there a poet or two on your bookshelf? Here at Cambridge in the novitiate house, our new brothers have found enjoyment in reading poetry to one another in the evenings. As they should, seeing how their business is to be words, words on account of the Word. Would-be friars preachers must have a care for words and for the beauty and authority of words, for that is our duty and our delight. Dominican sisters and brothers must study words and turns of phrase, they must consider images and rhythm in case they should say what they neither mean nor wish to say. It is a matter of finding the right word, as the poet says,

The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
the complete consort dancing together.

– T.S.Eliot, *Four Quartets*

The preacher's words are his dance before the Lord. And the poet and preacher of the Advent season is the prophet Isaiah. Though the book we know as Isaiah, mind, is more an anthology of prose and verse than the work of a single hand. The Isaiah of today's poem praises the God in whose gift is the garment of salvation (irresistibly, the image reminds us of a mother wrapping her child up warm against the winter chill). It is this poet also who sees how the God of the Jews rescues the Gentiles too from the shadows of ignorance and unbelief, The glory of the Lord will be seen upon you, and nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

The only one who can legitimately fulfil this oracle is the Messiah himself. He alone is in himself and to the exclusion of all others, good news and true light and life for the world, and his witness is one who is not the Christ, not Elijah, not the prophet of doom – not, not, not, for the sake of the One who Is. Because as John's gospel would have it, the Baptist is supremely the Witness, the one who is transparently truthful and whose word just has to be trusted.

A well-loved film about an ordinary family is called "Secrets & Lies" (directed by Mike Leigh, 1996). It hinges on the fact that we find it so difficult to tell the truth to one another, even to our nearest and dearest (perhaps especially to our nearest and dearest!) But not only in the family, we have to cope with fake news and flaky information. Where is my own country heading now, post-Brexit? What does the future hold? The direction national affairs is taking appears quite mysterious, even to those in charge of negotiations, seemingly. In world affairs too, the air is full of large threats and empty promises. I can't presume to think your thoughts, dear reader, or read what is in the bubble above your head! But we had to give a name to the times, perhaps we could call this the Doubtful Age. The one thing certain is that certainty is in short supply.

Advent is surely the time for Isaiah and the Baptist to be heard inviting us to love the truth of things, to stand in the truth, and know that certainty which Christ alone can give. 'Test everything, hold fast to what is good' writes St Paul to the Thessalonians (second reading). We need to recognise the true prophets and the authentic messengers on whom the Spirit rests. We need to refine our skills in discernment. We should put a distance between ourselves and all that smells of secrets, lies and persiflage in the common currency of politics, certainly. Put simply, we must be impatient to get at the truth of things, the truth of our fellow men and women in their aspirations and their sufferings, the certainty of the divine plan for the world through Israel and its Messiah. This is how we ready ourselves to meet and to welcome the Lord.