



# HOLY CROSS PRIORY CHURCH

SUNDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER 2017

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

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

## A WORD FROM THE PRIOR ...

*The First Sunday of Advent has arrived and so has the Advent Market. A frenzy of activity has entered the cloisters of the priory, while all the donations and gifts have been sorted to the right area, and ensure we're all ready for the 8am start on Sunday morning. It's been great to see so many people involved and working together, and we're almost at that target!*

*One highlight of the past week for me was the Annual Requiem Mass. It was good for us to gather to pray for our deceased relatives, and to show support for the families who have been bereaved in the past year or so. The reception that followed the beautiful Mass and Reception was very jovial.*

*As we move now into the Advent Season, we make careful preparation for Christmas, and we prepare our hearts to celebrate God's love for each one of us. One way of doing that would be to come along to the Day of Recollection next Saturday. Br Luke always has something interesting to say, and it is a short time of prayer for each one of us.*

*As this holy season unfolds, I cannot fail to remember that there are too many of our families that struggle to make ends meet. Christmas is a challenging time for many of us. Let's look out for each other, and be attentive to the range of needs.*

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

*Fr David*

## ADVENT MARKET – THIS SUNDAY AFTER 8AM AND 10.30AM MASS

All stations are go for the Advent Markey. It's always a fun way of raising much needed funds for our Dominican Community. **We aim to raise £5,000 at the Market**, and as usual, today is our opportunity for each one of us to do something to achieve this target. We are really grateful to the very many people who have worked hard in the last few weeks to make this happen, and all the effort is paying off. **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.

## 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.

## CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS AT HOLY CROSS

Details will be published next weekend for all our Christmas Masses, etc.

## 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

## 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 keep Tuesday Dec 19 free from 6.30pm** so that you can join us 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](mailto:hcross.social@gmail.com)

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

We invite you to join us 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.

## PROTECTING OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Do you support Catholic schools and the right of Catholics to send their children to them? Then we need you to make your voice heard. The Government is making a critical decision on whether to overturn the admissions cap which prevents new Catholic schools from allowing all Catholic pupils to attend. The Prime Minister has acknowledged that this policy discriminates against Catholics and had promised previously to abandon it. Now the Government may decide to keep this discriminatory policy in place instead of removing it. We need to tell the Government not to discriminate against Catholics and to remove the admissions cap on new faith-based schools. Visit <http://catholicnews.org.uk/education-cap> to write to the Government and urge them to drop their policy which bans new Catholic schools.

## 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.

## ADVENT DAY OF RECOLLECTION – SATURDAY AT 12:30PM – 4PM

On Saturday 9 December, Br Luke Doherty OP will lead our Advent Recollection for this year. We begin with 12:30pm Mass, followed by a light lunch. Conferences will follow on from lunch, and we will finish with a Holy Hour, to be concluded by 4pm. Please do take this opportunity to spend a few hours in recollection and prayer during Advent.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Our Holy Hour, each Sunday at 6pm

## 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](mailto:leicester.admin@english.op.org)

Lay University Chaplain: *Mr George Ralph* – [george.ralph@english.op.org](mailto:george.ralph@english.op.org)

Director of Music: *Mr Thomas Keogh* – [thomas@thomaskeogh.co.uk](mailto: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](http://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:

**£ 1,290.50**

(Gift aided: £444.50)

### **Woodhouse Collection**

**£196.00**

(Gift aided: £127.00)

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
CONTINUED SUPPORT!*

# THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK

## FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

### 1<sup>ST</sup> READING: WISDOM 6:12-16

In order to strengthen their faith, to find reasons for hope, the author of this wonderful passage looks back to the past (64:1-3). He remembers that God always intervenes to illuminate the dark nights of his people. He has in mind especially the night of liberation from Egypt and concludes: "No one has ever heard or perceived, no eye has ever seen a God besides you who works for those who trust in him" (64:3). Gathered in prayer, the deportees re-read their story and become aware of their mistakes: "You are angry with our sins. We have all withered like leaves, blown away by our iniquities" (vv. 4-6). This finding, which should bring them discouragement, instead makes them confidently exclaim: "And yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay and you are our potter; we are the work of your hand" (v. 7).

### 2<sup>ND</sup> READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-26,28

The first letter to the Corinthians begins with these verses. It was written by Paul to a community that had enthusiastically welcomed the gospel, but then, gave in to the lure of paganism; it had fallen back to the old vices. The Apostle was aware of these moral miseries and hereinafter of the letter, he will condemn them severely. However, at the beginning, he employs a gentle and polite language with which he highlights the wonders wrought by the grace of God. He recognizes that the Corinthians have been enriched with all spiritual gifts, that of word and knowledge

### GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:31 – 46

We begin to identify the main character of the parable. "The master of the house" is Jesus, but not gone. He only changed his way of being present among his own. Now he is closer to any person than when he was walking the streets of Palestine. Having entered the world of the resurrected, he is no longer subject, as then, to the limits of our human condition. That's why he invited his disciples to always keep alive the sense of his presence in their midst: "I am with you always, even to the end of this world" (Mt 28:20). It is not an easy perception because only one who has a sight that can scan beyond the thick darkness of the night can have it. The fact that the Lord warns that he comes "at night" is also worth noting. Like a thief, he comes when the world is shrouded in darkness.

## NEXT SUNDAY – SECOND 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

## YOUNGER THAN SIN

*Fr Leon reflects on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, which we celebrate on Friday this week.*

One of the frustrating features of life is the constant feeling of never quite getting there. When I was simply professed, people said, 'Ah, but you're not solemnly professed'. When I was solemnly professed, I wasn't yet ordained. When I became a deacon, my brothers pointed out that I was only a deacon.

And when I became a priest and came to Rome, I discovered that a distinction is made between junior and senior priests! The same is true in all walks of life; no matter how far you get, you are never quite there.

Do we value seniority so much because it is almost God-like? God, after all, is terribly senior; he's been around since before the world began. That would be true if God were a creature like us, temporal. But God is not old or senior. He is eternal, and that does not mean he is older than all things. It means he is prior to all things. From our perspective within time, God is 'ever ancient, ever new'.

So in a sense, God is newer than the newest thought you've just had. Because God is paradoxically 'ever ancient, ever new', his action in our lives is similar. Even though everything grows old and dies, the action of God's grace makes us young somehow.

At the end of Georges Bernanos's *Diary of A Country Priest*, the junior priest lies dying. His mentor, the senior priest, tells him to fix his mind on Our Lady: Our Lady 'the youngest daughter of the human race,' Our Lady who is 'younger than sin'. Because she is full of grace, Mary is so young in *the order of grace* that she does not and never did have that deficit of grace we call original sin.

This great mystery, the Immaculate Conception, is what we celebrate today. No matter what her age is in the order of *nature*, in the order of *grace* Mary is so young that she is untouched by sin and unrestrained by death, the first-fruits of Christ's victory.

This unique privilege of Mary, completely unmerited by her, seems to make her a super-human, beyond the reach of us mere mortals. But this is a problem with our perspective. Mary is the complete human being, and we are the defective ones. We are the hollow men, the badly drawn boys and girls, incomplete like the stick figures on the door of a public convenience. But Mary is a human being as she ought to be, replete with and completed in grace, fleshed out, perfect in her voluptuousness.

As a song by Mary Black puts it,

*'She is the perfect creature, natural in every feature'*

Our Lady is perfect because she is most perfectly natural, and she is utterly natural because she is filled-with-grace. Mary is full of grace because Christ is the fullness of grace, and it is from his grace, as Scripture says, that we have all received grace upon grace.

The salvation of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, is a pre-sacramental salvation. Mary does not need baptism. From the beginning of her existence she was utterly filled with God's grace. And this is why the Immaculate Conception is so important for us. Mary's pre-sacramental salvation is a sign of our post-sacramental life in the Kingdom of heaven.

What this feast means for us is that Christ's love does not stop with us merely being forgiven sinners, but it will transform us as though sin had *never been*. Our redemption will not be simply the happy end of a fraught journey. In our redemption we will be somehow mysteriously freed from our history. Even our sins will form the weave of a completed holiness. There will be no more striving to get there, because we will have arrived.

As Mary already is, so shall the whole Church be, as Scripture says, 'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and immaculate' (Ephesians 5.27).