



HOLY CROSS PRIORY CHURCH

SUNDAY 25TH DECEMBER 2016

CHRISTMAS DAY, YEAR A

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

FROM THE PRIOR'S DESK

So here it is, Merry Christmas. After all our preparations, we finally arrive at this wonderful time of joy. A song we all know that starts with these words tells us that everybody's having fun. And as I write, New Walk outside the window is certainly a place of merriment.

Christmas is of course a time of great joy. The story that we tell and tell again is such a heartwarming tale. Not only does it fill us with hope, it is the source of our hope. So it is right that everybody should be having fun. But sometimes having fun is hard, and sometimes we don't want to be joyful. It doesn't make sense. At Christmas, it is important to remember all those whose struggles are highlighted at this time of year. They're not always obvious to us.

Christmas Day at the Priory is always a busy one. After our morning Masses, we have an opportunity to visit those in the Prison and the Leicester Royal Infirmary, before we celebrate Solemn Vespers together and then gather for our Christmas meal.

At Christmas, we pray that all our friends and benefactors are having fun, and experiencing the joy of this holy time. And we are close to those who struggle, holding them in our prayers. Perhaps you would pray for us, and our families, too.

Fr David

A WORD OF APPRECIATION

Each week, our newsletter is brimming with requests for help with our events, and all the things that are part of our life and ministry to each other. At Christmas, there is an opportunity for us to use the newsletter to express our gratitude and appreciation to each and every one of you. As a community of faith and hope, we have worked well together not only to sustain what we hold dear, but to develop it. The Dominican Community has been astounded and humbled by the extraordinary generosity of our parishioners, benefactors, and friends over the past year. We have faced challenging times, and we have been strengthened in facing them together. In particular we thank our staff – Nick, Rachael, and George, and also Tom our Musical Director. Their dedication is vital to our ministry. Also to our colleagues in the prison and university chaplaincies, the headteachers, staff and governors in our schools, and to our colleagues in hospital chaplaincy, particularly Christina Mottram. All of our volunteers, some of whom give hours each week. To all we extend our profound gratitude.

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 February, after the 10:30am Mass in St Clement's Hall.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION CONFIRMATION

Forms for children and young people who wish to receive these sacraments in the new academic year (2016-17) are now in the Church. Please fill in and return.

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



800TH JUBILEE – A CELEBRATION OF THANKSGIVING

The actual 800th Anniversary of the Order was last Thursday, and the final day of our Jubilee Year is 21 January, when the Holy Father will celebrate Mass at the Lateran Basilica in Rome. We are delighted that **+Patrick our Bishop** will join us for a **Mass of Thanksgiving for Dominican Life in our Diocese** on **Saturday 28 January 2017 at 12:30pm**. This will be an opportunity to give thanks for everything we have celebrated during this special year. Please save the date.

THE DOMINICAN COMMUNITY

It is good to have Fr Thomas Crean back with us for Christmas. We are pleased to welcome Fr Simon Gainé OP, from our Priory in Oxford, who is with us for Christmas. Fr Simon is the Regent of Studies for our Province. On Tuesday, Fr Richard Conrad OP will arrive, a familiar face to many of us from his time as Prior here. We are grateful to the Oxford Community who have been supporting us with brethren visiting and helping us with our apostolate. Fr David will be away from Wednesday and Fr Robert will be away from Monday.

OFFICE HOURS

The Priory Office will be closed until 3 January, and during this week, there will be Mass only at 12:30pm each day. Sunday Masses next week will be as normal, and there will be no Children's Liturgy. Many thanks for your help.

THINGS TO REMEMBER.

- In the New Year – there will be a new Thursday evening course starting in late January for six weeks. More details in the New Year.
- Shared Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – 7pm at Leicester Cathedral, 25 January 2017. Organised by Churches Together.

THE DOMINICAN COMMUNITY

Fr David Rocks OP PP *Prior*; Fr Isidore Clarke OP; Fr Fabian Radcliffe OP;
Fr Neil Ferguson OP; Fr Thomas Crean OP; Fr Robert Gay OP CC *Subprior, Bursar*.

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:

£ 985.10

(Gift aided: £ 408.04)

Woodhouse Collection

£ 191.85

(Gift aided: £ 114.00)

Christmas Flowers

£ 208.37

The Jubilee Prayer

God, Father of mercy, who called your servant St Dominic 800 years ago, to found the Order of Preachers in the service of your Gospel, renew within the Church as we celebrate this Jubilee the Spirit of the Risen Christ, that we might faithfully and joyfully walk with St. Dominic as pilgrims and preachers of grace. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK

READINGS FOR CHRISTMASTIDE

MIDNIGHT MASS GOSPEL: LUKE 2:1-14

As usual, St Luke is careful to place the events in their proper historical context to emphasize the reality of the Incarnation. What is extraordinary is that eternity and time meet, represented not only by the angels, but by the birth of God himself as one of us, but without sin.

DAWN MASS GOSPEL: LUKE 2:15-20

As with most biblical names, Bethlehem has a significant meaning. It means 'house of bread', reminding us that the child born there will one day give himself as the 'Bread of Life.' Mary gives the Christ child to the world, and he gives himself, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, to us - in the Eucharist.

DAY MASS GOSPEL: JOHN 1:1-18

Time and eternity alternate in a dizzying yet measured way in the opening of John's Gospel. The wonder of the Incarnation is that the Divine Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who is in the bosom of the eternal Father, takes on our human nature, in a specific moment in time and space. As the Fathers of the Church put it, "God became man, so that man might become partakers in God." (The word "beginning" here, does not refer to anything temporal, but rather means "source", "from all eternity.")

DOMINICAN RITE MASS (DAY MASS) LESSON: ISAIAH 52:6-10

St Thomas Aquinas said that the Book of Isaiah is more like a Gospel than a prophecy, so clear is its teaching about the Incarnation, and the Passion of the Lord. Here the prophecy is unambiguous. "Here I am". The phrase about the beauty of the feet of God's messenger is literally made true by Christ, who is not only the messenger but the message, God himself.

EPISTLE: HEBREWS 1:1-12

As well as teaching clearly, the reality of Christ's Divinity and Incarnation, the letter to the Hebrews teaches us that we should now read the Psalms (and all the Old Testament) in the light of Christ. Here a verse of Psalm 2 (7) and of 2 Sam 7 (14) are presented as primarily a dialogue between the eternal Father and the eternal Word.

GOSPEL: JOHN 1:1-18

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NEXT SUNDAY –

OCTAVE DAY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (YEAR A)

Prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look towards Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.

St Therese of Lisieux

THE WORD AT WORK: OUR WEEKLY REFLECTION

A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

Fr Fabian muses on the meaning of Christmas

I wonder what Christmas Day was like for the donkey. And don't start saying: 'There's no donkey mentioned in the Gospels'. Well, maybe not, but how else would Mary have got to Bethlehem? She could hardly have walked all the way, being nine months pregnant. I think the donkey knew there was something momentous happening. Animals often have that kind of instinct. They can sense when an earthquake or a volcanic eruption is about to happen. So I guess the donkey knew something momentous was happening, even if it could not say what it was. Perhaps we are all a bit like that. We find it hard to say what Christmas means. But we know it is great.

What about the others who were involved? There were the shepherds. The vision of angels and heavenly music frightened them; and the angelic message told them of a birth; but lambing was the only kind of birth they really knew about. Still, they recovered from their fear and hurried down to Bethlehem, to kneel at the stable in wordless wonder. I don't expect they could say what it was all about, but they too knew that something momentous was happening.

The other visitors were the Wise Men. They had come a long way, led by a star. A dubious story, you might think, but people have often been led or driven by their dreams, and find in the end that their dreams come true. They were Wise Men after all, and knew a thing or two. But they did not let their wisdom go to their heads. The unexpected end of their search was a new-born infant; and being rich in possessions they gave generously: gold, frankincense and myrrh – riches untold, but yet as nothing when compared with the One to whom the gifts were given.

The Wise Men link up with Herod. He reacted very differently from the others. His one thought was: 'This is a rival. I must destroy him'. And he set out on a rampage of killing, typical of the human sin which the Prince of Peace had come to heal. In the long run, which is more powerful: Herod's anger, or Jesus' love?

The other man in the story stays quietly in the background: Joseph, the steadfast, the man of honour, thinking not of himself but of Mary his wife, and Jesus his adopted son. Ponder the selfless love of Joseph, the rock on which Mary could always rely.

All these characters are men. What about Mary? I suppose men can never really know what it is like to give birth: to carry a child for nine months, feeling it growing, kicking, resting, and finally coming into the light by that almost miraculous process of human birth - knowing that this child is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. That is what Mary knew. But she would also have known that though the child was totally hers, he was also totally God's. There was that about him which made him at the same time both completely like the rest of us, and also completely different.

And what about us? How do we respond to this great event, this Christmas moment, so unlike any other in the whole human story, and yet which permeates everything? Do we really believe that there is something totally unique about this birth, even if we cannot express it?

The one character we would not want to be like is Herod. If we were like him we would not be here, at Mass, reading this Newsletter and kneeling at the Crib. Let's pray for those who in the present behave like Herod, responding to the Prince of Peace by violence and murder. Joseph and Mary are our models. They combine in themselves the great and good qualities of all the others. With them, we can come to the crib and worship the new-born Child, and make our offerings, even though they seem paltry. With them, we can live as part of the Holy Family, gathered around Jesus, our new-born King, our Saviour and our Friend.

Fr Fabian Radcliffe OP