# THE ORATORY—**dedicated to** THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

141 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 8UE Registered as a Charity

# Parish Weekly Newsletter

Telephone: 0121 454 0496 Fac simile: 0121 455 8160 E-mail: parish@theoratory.org.uk Web-site: www.theoratory.org.uk

Oratory Primary School: web.oratory.bham.sch.uk

This newsletter is available in largeprint format. Ask at the Sacristy.



## December 21st 2008: THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



#### **GOD HAS BECOME A MAN**

In today's Gospel we hear the account of the Annunciation to Our Lady. This is such a familiar story that we can run the risk of taking it for granted. But what a wonderful event it is—truly amazing, when one only begins to reflect even a little on it!

Why else did God take such pains to prepare fallen mankind? It was because of His plan for the *Incarnation* of His Divine Son. The Incarnation is a fact which we cannot fully grasp. How can Almighty God, infinite and omnipotent spirit, become a part of His own creation? Without God's revelation of this, we could never have imagined it. God began to prepare us for this wonderful truth as far back as the Fall of our first parents, when He said to Satan: "I will make you enemies of each other; you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel" (Genesis 3:15). In this way, however obscurely, God was promising both that rescue would come to mankind, and that it would come from one of Adam and Eve's own descendants. From this, the first announcement of the Saviour, the Church has ever since called Our Blessed Lady the "New Eve", for it is from her offspring that we have been rescued from eternal death.

Throughout the many following centuries, God often spoke through those whom He chose to bear His message of salvation: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Later still, God chose Moses to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. It was to be a long and painful journey in which God taught them patience and obedience, giving them the Commandments and the Ark of the Covenant as a sign of His favour. The Ark of the

Covenant was the most sacred sign of God's presence, containing as it did the original tablets of stone on which God had give His Law to the chosen people via Moses on Mount Sinai. Centuries later, King David wanted to build a permanent dwelling place for this sacred Ark, and planned a fitting Temple. But as we hear in today's First Reading, God sends the prophet Nathan to tell David that he cannot build such a place. God cannot live in a temple made by human hands. Yet God still shows great favour to David. Nathan tells him that there will always be a king among his descendants.

The fulfilment of these two statements is found in Mary and Jesus. Mary becomes the living temple of God's dwelling-place, when the Son of God enters into her womb and becomes her Son. This is why we call her the "Ark of the Covenant", in whose most holy body Our Lord becomes man. This is the real heart of the Incarnation—that God actually became man. It is a mystery too great for us to grasp, but it is revealed to us by God Himself in the message brought by the Angel Gabriel to our Blessed Lady in today's Gospel. Moreover, Jesus is the "Son of David" and fulfils God's promise to King David, that his royal line would never fail.

## **OUR LADY QUESTIONS BUT DOES NOT DOUBT**

So Our Lady's response to the Angel Gabriel is very important in so many ways. What should she say? What does the Angel's message mean? She is "deeply disturbed", because it is clear that God has shown her great favour and is now asking her to do something tremendous, and beyond her power to grasp fully. She must trust Him even though she does not know what it means. And how is she to bear a Son when she has promised her virginity as an offering to God? Some suggest that such a vow or promise of virginity by Our Lady is not likely, that it would not have been authentic among the Jews of her time. Yet this is not so. John the Baptist also remained unmarried in a state of consecration to God, and so, of course, did Our Lord Himself. Even if unusual, it is not impossible. Cardinal Newman was brought up in a society which took marriage for granted, even for the Anglican clergy. Yet he also believed from an early age that God had called him to consecrate himself in a celibate state. Our Lady similarly questions how she is to be a mother if she is also to remain a virgin. This is not to doubt God's word, simply to ask for clarification that she is not being asked to dispense with her special consecration to God. She learns from the Angel that she will remain a virgin precisely in order to be God's Mother. Her virginity is not barrenness, but allows her a greater dedication to God than marriage would bring.

Finally, in the Incarnation we recognise the wonderful truth that God our creator and redeemer chooses to share our own nature. Human nature has been raised to unimaginable dignity because God Himself shares it with us! That is the magic of Christmas!

## **Sunday December 21st: The Fourth Sunday of Advent** (Purple)

• 8.30 a.m. Low Mass

• 9.30 a.m. Latin Low Mass (1962 Missal:)

10.30 a.m. High Mass

• 12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)

• 5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass

• 7.30 p.m. Vespers and Benediction

## THE CHRISTMAS SEASON WEEK OF THE YEAR: Liturgical Calendar

Year 2 or B of the Lectionary at Mass and Psalter Week 4

Monday and Tuesday: Masses at 7.30 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m. Rosary at 7.45 p.m. Confessions are heard from 12.30 p.m. and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass.

Wednesday onwards: PLEASE SEE OVERLEAF

Monday December 22nd: Weekday of Advent: 22nd December. (Purple) Blessing with St Philip's relic at 8 p.m. 'O Rex Gentium': O King desired by the nations, You are the corner stone that builds up unity from what was divided; Come! and save man whom You formed from the dust of the earth. Tuesday December 23rd: Weekday of Advent: 23rd December. 'O Emmanuel' (Purple). Benediction at 8.00 p.m. 'O Emmanuel': O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the One awaited by the nations, and their Saviour; Come! and save us, Lord our God. Wednesday December 24th: Christmas Eve: Mass at 7.30 a.m. and 12.45 p.m.  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\square}$ ☆ **SOLEMNITY OF CHRISTMAS** ☆ ☆ Wednesday December 24th Christmas Eve continued: Confessions will be heard all day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. ☆• ☆• **4.00 p.m. Mass in the 1962 Rite,** Mass of Christmas Midnight 6.00 p.m. "VIGIL MASS" of Christmas: (Both these Masses fulfil the ☆• ☆ ☆ Christmas Day Obligation) 11.15 p.m. CAROLS followed by MIDNIGHT MASS at 12 midnight ☆  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\square}$ Thursday December 25th: Christmas Day: Holyday of Obligation (White)  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\square}$ **☆** MASS TIMES: ☆ • (Low) Mass at 8.00, 9.00, 10.00 a.m. ☆• Extraordinary Rite: at 9.30 in St Philip's Chapel  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\mathbf{x}}$ ☆• SOLEMN HIGH MASS at 11.00 a.m. ☆ ☆ • Final (Low) Mass at 12.30 p.m. ☆ ☆ • SOLEMN BENEDICTION at 5.30 p.m. ☆ Friday December 26th: St Stephen, the First Martyr. Feast. (Red) ☆ **St Stephen** (1st c.) A renowned preacher and one of the first seven deacons chosen by ☆  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\square}$ the Apostles, his success in converting others led to him being brought before the  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\square}$  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\square}$ Sanhedrin. His masterly witness to Our Lord's Divinity resulted in his being sen-☆ tenced to death by stoning, the first person to die for the Faith. ☆ ☆ Saturday December 27th: St John the Apostle. Feast. (White) ☆ •  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\mathbf{x}}$ Mass at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. ☆.  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\mathbf{x}}$ Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m. ☆ • ☆ Benediction at 10.45 ☆ •  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\mathbf{x}}$ Confessions from 10.55 a.m. to 12 noon and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of ☆  $\stackrel{\wedge}{\mathbf{x}}$ ☆ •

First Mass of Sunday: The FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY, at 5.45 p.m.

St John (1st c.) Apostle and Evangelist, he was the brother of St James, and with St ☆ Peter, they were chosen by Our Lord to witness His Transfiguration. John "the Be-🖈 loved Disciple", was particularly close to Our Lord due to his purity of heart and un- 🛣 derstanding of Our Lord as God. For this reason, he is also known as "The Divine", i. e. Theologian. Our Lord chose him to care for Our Lady after the Crucifixion. ☆

\$\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} \frac

Sunday December 28th: The Feast of the **Holy Family.** (White)

## **Mass & Service Times:**

- 8.30 a.m. *Low Mass*
- 9.30 a.m. Latin low Mass (1962 Missal)
- 10.30 a.m. High Mass
- 12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)
- 5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass in English
- 7.30 p.m. Vespers and **Benediction**

Please pray for the sick Mary McKenna, Peter Burt, Marie Therese-Jones, Mary Cunliffe, Margaret Casey, Carole Halls, Monica Webbley, Kathleen Devere and Olive d'Silva.

Of your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died recently: James Rutland, Patrick McLarnon, Patrick Malone, Patricia Maloney, Mary Cullen and Mura Ruddock:

and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now: Fr Gerard Sugden, Bill Chavasse, Michael Rohan, Maureen Dwyer, Alfred Nicklin, Maud Heron and Thomas Cunningham.

#### The following are requested to read at Mass next weekend, December 27th/28th, Feast of the Holy Family:

Saturday 5.45 p.m.: Jenni Hardwick Sunday 8.00 a.m.: Margaret Hawkins 12.00 p.m: Chris Sammons 5.30 p.m.: Simon Stacey

#### **Collections:**

Third Sunday of Advent, 13th December: Offertory: £1,754 Second: Poor of the Parish: £734

Thank you

The second collection today will be for our music

The second collection at Christmas Masses will be the offering for the Oratory fathers at Christ-

The Crib collection is for the Apostles of Jesus Seminary at Bukinda in Uganda

The SECOND COLLECTION THIS WEEKEND is for the music fund. The ORATORY CHRISTMAS PRIZE DRAW: Please take and sell as many tickets as you can over Christmas (Tickets: £1 per book or 20p each). There will be several prizes, in addition to the first prize of £500, and other cash prizes. Please return money and ticket stubs to the Oratory House, or at the sacristy, preferably in an envelope marked 'Prize Draw'. The draw will be made on the Feast of the Epiphany, Tuesday January 6th, in the Lower Cloister Hall, after the high Mass at 8 p.m.

The PIETY STALL is open after all Sunday Masses. GIFT VOUCHERS are now available, The new Diocesan Catholic Directory is also on sale.

#### THIS WEEK

The 2nd COLLECTION AT CHRISTMAS MASSES will be for the Fathers. The ANNUAL PRO-LIFE VIGIL of the Feast of the Holy Innocents will take place in the Cloister Chapel, commencing on Saturday night (27th) at 10 p.m. and ending with Holy Mass at 6 a.m. on Sunday. (Entrance via car park)

**ADORATION AT REDNAL** will *not* take place this week, nor next and is expected to recommence on Wednesday, January 7th.

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S BOOKCLUB: The next meeting will be on Monday 22nd, from 12-2 p.m. Guest speaker: Dr Caroline Farey who will

discuss her new book "'Nativity'. A Visual Meditation", which is available at the Piety stall, as well as on the day.

☆

#### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

Our TALKS On ST PAUL & HIS TEACHINGS will recommence after Christmas, on January 10th, and will be held in the Lower Cloister Hall on Saturday mornings (approx 11.30 a.m.) after the 11 a.m. Mass

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY is the patron of the English Pastoral Clergy. There will be a High Mass here on his feast day, Monday 29th December according to the 1962 Missal at 11 a.m.

NEW YEAR'S EVE VIGIL: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 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 (January 1st) will be at 11.45 p.m. Refreshments will be served after Mass.

### **NOTICES**

APF RED BOX HOLDERS: The quarter ends on 31st December. Your collector will contact you in due course to make arrangements for collection and exchange of your box. Many thanks for your co-operation.

ANNIE BRIGHT RESIDENTIAL HOME, (for women) Norfolk Rd has vacancies for one Senior Carer and Two Care Assistants. Please contact Sr Anita or Mrs Buchanan, Tel: 0121 454 1289