

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 large-print format. Ask at the Sacristy.

December 6th 2009: THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



THE VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

Today the Gospel introduces the figure of St. John the Baptist "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". St. Luke, from whose Gospel we will be reading during this liturgical year which has just begun, gives us very precise historical details of just when all these events took place—events which were to usher in Our Lord's public ministry, the era of the Messiah.

This emphasis on dates and historically verifiable persons was divinely guided. The Holy Spirit, Who inspires all Sacred Scripture, foresaw that a time would come when some people would question the very fact of Christ's existence, let alone His saving Work for all mankind. With this in view, He made sure that St. Luke put down every detail which would show future generations that all he writes about is no myth or legend, but the simple truth.

So John the Baptist has a very special role in history—he is the person chosen by God to introduce the world to its Saviour. The coming of that Saviour had long been foretold by such great prophets as Isaiah—who lived over 600 years before Our Lord was

born. He is pictured above next to John the Baptist, gazing into the distant future, looking out for the Messiah whose coming he foretells in today's first reading: "Prepare a way for the Lord, make His paths straight...and all mankind will see the salvation of our God". When we reflect on these words, we remember the Creed which we recite or sing every Sunday: "We believe in the Holy Spirit...who has spoken through the prophets". Like the Evangelists, the Prophets too were especially chosen and guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote. Although their words come from so many centuries ago and were written in another language for people with very different experiences of life, those words still speak to us today because of the presence in them of the Spirit of God who ensures that those writings remain ever fresh and full of truth for every generation yet to come, until the end of the world.

John's message was very urgent, calling for repentance, urging the people who had grown cold in their faith to turn back to God. How can this be so? Surely the Jewish people of Our Lord's day were all very religious? Yes, they were religious in the sense that they all believed in the Scriptures as being God's word, and believed that they belonged to the unique race especially chosen by God to be His people. Yet they had made serious mistakes concerning God's plan for them. They believed that the Messiah foretold by Isaiah would be a great military leader who would drive out the pagans and set up a new religious state in which they could hold their heads high. These were known as the "zealots" and at least one of the Apostles had been one of these before Our Lord called him. Like John the Baptist, the zealots lived not in the city, but out in the wilderness, in fanatical communities where they studied the writings of the prophets and prepared for war against the Romans.

But John the Baptist was not like the zealots. His preaching did not prepare anyone for war, except for the war against sin. He wanted only to prepare people for the coming of Almighty God into their midst. Would they be ready? Would they know Him when He arrived? Would they listen to His voice and teaching? Well, it is thanks to John's faithful ministry that some at least were. Some of his own followers became the first to follow Our Lord, including St. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. They had learned so much from John that they were able to recognise Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the true fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies. John's preaching was to "prepare a way for the Lord" by making "His paths straight". The winding paths are those which we cannot see far along, in which we take refuge as in half-truths. Similarly, John was called to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy as the forerunner by "filling in every valley and laying low every mountain". These are not the valleys and mountains of geography, but of the human soul. John called men to look into their hearts and souls and see where the ruggedness of selfishness and sin kept God out. Repentance would put an end to that and make them ready for Christ. That is why John's message is not for his time only, but speaks to every time, including our own.

Sunday December 6th: The Second 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**

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT: Liturgical Calendar

Year 2 of the Lectionary at Mass and Psalter Week 2 in the Divine Office

Monday to Friday: Masses at 7.30 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m.

Monday: First Vespers of the Immaculate Conception at 7.30 p.m.

Exposition on Saturday: 8.30–10.45 a.m.

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

Monday 7th December: St Ambrose, Bishop & Doctor of the Church. Memoria. (White)

- **First Vespers of the Immaculate Conception at 7.30 p.m.**

St Ambrose (c.340-397) Bishop of Milan, he was one of the greatest bishops of the early Church: an excellent administrator, a champion of the poor, fearless when dealing with tyrannical rulers and a renowned theologian. He was also the first bishop to write hymns for the use of the people to strengthen their faith and deepen their devotion. He baptised St Augustine of Hippo.

Tuesday 8th December: SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. Patroness of this Oratory (White)

- **Low Masses at 7.30 a.m.; 9.30 a.m. (Schoolchildren); 12.45 p.m.; 5.45 p.m.**
- **SOLEMN HIGH MASS AT 8 P.M.**

Wednesday 9th December: Wednesday of Advent Week 2. (Purple) Optional memoria of St Juan Diego Cuatitlatatzin. (White).

St Juan Diego (d.1548) Our Lady appeared to Juan, a poor Mexican Indian convert, on December 8th 1531, and requested a shrine to be built in her honour. (See Our Lady of Guadalupe below)

Thursday 10th December: Thursday of Advent Week 2. (Purple) Optional memoria of St Edmund Gennings, Priest & English Martyr. (Red).

St Edmund Gennings (1567-91) Born in Lichfield, he became a Catholic and a priest while still young, and was betrayed to the authorities by his protestant brother. Edmund was offered money and position to denounce the Faith, but he refused and was condemned. His brother witnessed the particularly brutal execution and was converted as a result. Other English martyrs executed on this date were Sts Eustace White, Polydore Plasden and John Roberts (priests), and St Swithun Wells (a layman).

Friday 11th December: Friday of Advent Week 2. (Purple). Optional memoria of St Damasus, Pope. (White)

St Damasus (d.384) Though born in Rome he was a Spaniard, elected Pope in 366. He introduced various reforms, including commissioning his friend (St) Jerome to correct the Latin Bible. During his pontificate, Catholicism became the religion of the Roman State, and many previously neglected sacred sites and churches were restored by him.

Saturday 12th December: Saturday of Advent Week 2. (Purple). Optional memoria of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (White)

- **Masses at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.**
- **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m.**
- **Benediction at 10.45 a.m.**
- **Confessions from 10.55 a.m. to 12 noon & from 5.30 p.m.**
- **First Mass of Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) at 5.45 p.m.**

Our Lady of Guadalupe When St Juan Diego Cuatitlatatzin (see above) reported Our Lady's apparition to his bishop, he asked for a sign. Our Lady told Juan to gather the flowers around her into his cloak and to take it rolled up until he was in the presence of the bishop. When Juan unrolled the cloak, Our Lady's image was emblazoned on the cloak which is still preserved in Mexico. Science has only been able to confirm that the image is 'not made by hands'. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patron of the Americas and of unborn children.

December 13th: The Third Sunday of Advent (Rose): "Gaudete!"

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 in English**
- **7.30 p.m. Vespers and Benediction**

Please pray for the sick Vicky Davis, Laurence O'Regan, Franco Muro, Geoff Jones, Frances Ratcliffe, David Pritchard, Leroy McCoy, Carolyn Knight, Paul Beesley, James Foynes, Michael McCann, Philip McCann, Ray Colquhoun, Celia Reddy and John Murphy.

Of your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died recently: Sr Francis Clare; and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now: Fr Stanislaus du Moulin-Browne of this Oratory, Kenneth Chavasse, Esther Wilk, Charles Henry Rushton, Grace O'Donnell, Mary Bridget Monaghan, Brother John Anderson, John Barnicott, Ivy Green, Lucy Hood-Philips and Sadie Christie

The following are requested to read at Mass next weekend, December 12th/13th, Third Sunday of Advent:

Saturday 5.45 p.m.: Jenni Hardwick
Sunday 8.30 a.m.: Margaret Hawkins
12.00 p.m.: Dulcie Robinson
5.30 p.m.: Simon Stacey

Collections:

1st Sunday of Advent: 29th November, 2009
Offertory: £1,592
Second: Beatification Expenses: £610

Thank you

The Second Collection this week will be for the Poor Parishes of the Diocese.

Next weekend it will be for Poor families in our own Parish

TODAY

EPIPHANY DRAW tickets are at the Church Doors. Please take as many as possible for yourselves and to sell to others. Please return counterfoils and money in an envelope marked "Prize Draw" to one of the Fathers or to the Oratory House.

THIS WEEK

ADORATION AT REDNAL with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place on **Monday (please note different day!)**, commencing with Mass at 2.30 p.m. and ending with Benediction at c. 4.30 p.m.

OUR ADVENT TALKS continue on Saturday at 11.30 a.m. in the Lower Cloister Hall. The third talk will be on "Newman and The Incarnation" and will be given by Fr. Gregory.

SOCIETY OF ST HUGH meets Saturday 2 p.m. Oratory House. All welcome.
THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY is holding a carol service at St Chad's Cathedral on **Saturday 12th December at 2.30 p.m.** Entrance is **FREE**. There will be Christmas readings, choirs and an opportunity to join in with some rousing carol singing before wandering along to

the Birmingham Christmas Market a five minute walk away. Please come and support us.

NOTICES

The PIETY STALL is open after Saturday 11 a.m. and 5.45 p.m. Masses and all Sunday Masses. Advent Calendars, Books and other items for children, Advent wreaths, Cribbs, Christmas cards, diaries, DVDs and other Christmas and gift items are on sale, including those we are selling on behalf of Aid to the Church in Need.

"The NATIVITY TRAIL" of paintings portraying the birth of Our Lord can be visited at the City's Art Gallery until January 6th, admission free. It is highly recommended for all the family.

ORDER OF MALTA PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES. All sick, disabled and aged people are invited to take part in a pilgrimage from Friday 30th April to Friday 7th May. £250 is asked towards the cost, but anything over that amount is welcomed from those who can afford it. Accommodation in the Accueil Notre Dame. For details contact Anthony Brown on 01823 480441 or e email: alison-anthony@battensfarm.fsnet.co.uk

YEAR FOR PRIESTS—a reflection by Pope Benedict XVI

Let us ask the Lord Jesus for the grace for priests to learn something of Saint John Vianney's pastoral plan! The first thing we need to learn is the complete identification of the man with his ministry. In Jesus, person and mission tend to coincide: all Christ's saving activity was, and is, an expression of his "filial consciousness" which from all eternity stands before the Father in an attitude of loving submission to his will. In a humble yet genuine way, every priest must aim for a similar identification. Certainly this is not to forget that the efficacy of the ministry is independent of the holiness of the minister; but neither can we overlook the extraordinary fruitfulness of the encounter between the ministry's objective holiness and the subjective holiness of the minister.