

newsletter



19th & 20th December 2009

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Year C

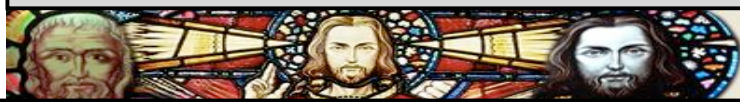


Catholic Parish of The Sacred Heart *Our Mission*

Through the power of the Holy Spirit we will be a parish renewed in our knowledge and understanding of the love of Jesus Christ, to enable each of us to fulfil our Christian mission.

Pope Close, Flitwick, MK45 1JP
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Times of Mass



Saturday 19 th December	6.00 pm	St Andrew's Ampthill	Michael Riley, RIP
Sunday 20 th December	9.00 am	Sacred Heart Church	Donna Spillane, RIP
	11.00 am	Sacred Heart Church	Betty and Thomas McCann, RIP
	5.00 pm	Sacred Heart Church	Private Intentions – Latin Mass
Monday 21 st December	9.30 am	Sacred Heart Church	Denis Hanafin, RIP
Tuesday 22 nd December	9.30 am	Sacred Heart Church	Private Intentions
Wednesday 23 rd December	9.30 am	Sacred Heart Church	Private Intentions
Thursday 24 th December	9.30 am	Sacred Heart Church	Margaret McSwiney, RIP
	6.00 pm	Sacred Heart Church	Jim Brophy, RIP
	9.00 pm	Sacred Heart Church	Special Intentions
Friday 25 th December	10.00 am	Sacred Heart Church	Parish Intentions
	11.30 am	St Andrew's Ampthill	Hilary Brimble, RIP
Saturday 26 th December	9.30 am	Sacred Heart Church	Private Intentions

Fr. Denis writes;

Are you more likely to hire a builder from a big advert in the local paper, or someone your best friend recommended? We would all rather have a personal endorsement. It does not necessarily follow that the recommended builder is any better than the one in the advert, but it feels less risky. In our Internet age, this idea of personal recommendation has led to the success of websites like Facebook and MySpace, which has created networks of contacts who recommend links to further pages.

The shepherds mentioned in the Gospels at Christmas wanted to reach out to others to share their joy and tidings. Like the Apostles at Pentecost later in the Bible, they

know this story needs to be told.

Through the shepherds' story we have a personal recommendation of the truth of the amazing Christmas story. The experience of a group of ordinary people, going about their work, is turned upside down by the story and the experience. We know the Christmas story, we can recite parts of it by heart, we sing about it. Do we let it change our world?

Already we have shared some of this story through our cards, our greetings, the kind things we try to do over this time of year. Then, on Christmas Day, we make an extra effort to get on with others, and to forgive. It would be a great thing if we could take that spirit into next year. Think of the change it would bring about.

A Reflection by Fr. Denis

The Gospel tells the story of Mary, now expecting the birth of Jesus the Saviour, going to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who herself is looking forward to the birth of her son, John the Baptist.



It is tempting to see this as a human interest story where mutual congratulations will be exchanged. However, Luke does not see it that way. This is a religious story carrying weighty meaning about God and God's dealings with us humans and in particular about the imminent coming of the Saviour. He teaches us that Mary, as she hastens to the Judean hills, is bringing the good news of the coming of the Messiah, the Saviour. This is good news for all people and Mary is, in effect, a preacher spreading the word.

Elizabeth immediately recognises the presence of the Lord, coming, as it were, in the new Ark of the Covenant, and she declares both Mary and her child blessed. Elizabeth also praises Mary's faith, thus portraying her as a woman of faith, a true disciple of her Son. The child leaping in Elizabeth's womb is an anticipation of what happens later in the ministry of John the Baptist. He recognises and bears witness to the Messiah and points Him out to his listeners as the one to come after him and who is greater than him, John.

At the coming of the Saviour, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. This anticipates the salvific work of Jesus, which results in the coming of the same Spirit, not just at Pentecost but for all people in the era of the Messiah and the Church He established.

After this, one would expect Mary to bless Elizabeth. However, Luke inserts the hymn we call The Magnificat in which Mary praises God for the great things God has done to her and others. Today's Gospel does not contain this hymn, but it is appropriate to mention it, nonetheless, as it shows Mary interpreting the good news of God's love and care for His people as Jesus did later in His ministry.

Date to Remember - Tea and Talk 4th January

Information

CONFESSIONS

Saturday mornings from 11.00 am – please see newsletter for changes.

PRAYER LINE

Please ring for intercessory prayer on 01525 634 186. We have some wonderful answers to prayers. Be assured of full confidentiality.

HOSPITAL, SICK OR HOUSE-BOUND?

Please let us know of anyone who needs a visit or requires Holy Communion at home.

THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL GROUP

Meets every Monday at 7.45 pm. If you would like to join us or would like more details, contact John Flannigan on 01525 406 810.

LITTLE 'UNS

Meet every Friday 10.15 am–11.45 am in term time, in the Church Hall. For further information please contact Debbie Lewis on 01525 406 815 or Kerry Skidmore on 01525 635 095.

CARDS, GIFTS, etc.

Are available for sale in Sacred Heart Church Hall after 9.00 am and 11.00 am Masses. All are priced. Please put money in the repository box in the porch or see Margaret.

CHURCH NEWSLETTER ONLINE

The church newsletter is available online from the website
<http://www.sacredheartflitwick.co.uk>

SUNDAY LATIN MASS

Fr. Armand de Malleray, of the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter, celebrates the Latin Mass here each Sunday at 5.00 pm. The Mass, from the Missal of 1962, fulfils the Sunday Obligation.

Offertory collections for 12th and 13th December was £618.18. The building fund was £478.00 Thank you, Fr Denis.

Newsletter copy deadline – Monday 12.00 midday. Newsletter contact: Suzanne Yates, email suz_yates@btinternet.com; telephone 01525 840 661 *Please note new day!!*

Christmas Eve Children's Mass at 6.00 pm

Calling all children (Year 1 to 7) who would like to have a special part in the service on Christmas Eve (Readers, Offertory, Meet & Greet, etc.).

Please come to a short practice after 9.00 am Mass on Sunday 20th December.

Queries to Siobhan Campbell 01525 630 384



Church cleaning will be on 22nd December at 7.30 pm – all welcome. Training and equipment provided!



CONFIRMATION 2010

Thank you to the parishioners, who have come forward to assist with Confirmation preparation, and to the young people who have put their names forward for preparation. If you have not already done so, there is still time.

If you are school year 8+ and would like to be confirmed in 2010 then give Canon Denis a note with your name, age, and contact details as soon as possible.

Preparation sessions are expected to start in January so watch this space for more information.

Carols by Candlelight 7.00 pm on 20th December. This is a traditional carol service where you get to sing all your favourite carols.



FACILITIES FUND - ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

Many, many thanks to so many generous people who have offered to make additional donations to build up the Facilities Fund.

A number of parishioners who had not originally made this pledge have asked how they can best do this. You can either complete an 'I am willing to support ...' form, which you can find on the newsletter shelf at the back of Sacred Heart Church, and 'Additional Donation' envelopes will be sent to you, or you can simply pick up and use the small brown 'Additional Donation' envelopes that can be found also on the newsletter shelf at the back of Sacred Heart Church and will be made available alongside the newsletters at Ampthill.

As and when you are willing and able to make your additional donation simply pop it in to the envelope, seal it, and put it in the collection basket at Mass along with your normal offering.

If this is not convenient you can always drop it through Canon Denis' letterbox and they will be collected on a regular basis.

GIVING TREE UPDATE



Thank you to everybody who supported this year's Giving Tree – the response has been most generous once again and has greatly outstripped last year's total. At the time of writing (10.03pm on Monday 14th December 2009) 735 'items' have been donated and these will all be taken to the Prebend Day Centre in Bedford (and should have reached there by the time you read this). For your interest the most donated items were pairs of socks (141 pairs) closely followed by tins of tuna and toothbrushes.

May God bless you all for your continuing generosity.

Date to remember – White Flower Collection 9th & 10th January

Reminder			
Readers and drivers for next week, 19 th and 20 th December.			
Mass	6.00 pm - Ampthill	9.00 am - Flitwick	11.00 am - Flitwick
1 st Reader	Christopher McMellon	Dermott Whelan	Felicity Detemple
2 nd Reader	Charles Waterford	John Flanagan	Noelette Hanley
Eucharistic Minister		Noreen Glover	Lawton
Driver		Marion McClurg	
Readers and drivers for next week, 26 th and 27 th December.			
Mass	6.00 pm - Ampthill	9.00 am - Flitwick	11.00 am - Flitwick
1 st Reader	Suzanne Yates	Bea Cheshire	C. or H. Davies
2 nd Reader	Angela Bartlett	Eamonn Diver	Dennis Horner
Eucharistic Minister		Rincon	Clare Bevan
Driver		David Linda	

Thoughts from the homily

Fr. Denis

To make a promise is always to put yourself in debt; it invites another person to trust you until you can deliver on your word.

Sometimes we promise too much too quickly and we soon learn that we can't deliver the goods. As Ovid observed two thousand years ago, when it comes to promises we can all be millionaires. On the other hand, we're sometimes so doubtful of our own capacity to keep promises that we don't make any. So, we live in the absence of promise, which means that other people have to do the same.

To believe a promise is an act of trust in the person who makes it; it is to live in expectation holding fast to someone's word. And when promises are fulfilled there is a deepening of the original trust. However, if people have a distinctly wobbly track record on keeping their word, we tend to be cautious about their sparkling new promises. We may file them under 'Long Shots' and forget them: none of us wants to conspire in our own disappointment. Or when things look uncertain we may send accusing reminders: 'But you promised ...'

Of course, in all this we know that we cannot retire completely from giving and receiving promises. Life itself comes to us as a promise, and trust has to be exercised in the midst of the real frailty within and around us. So, when it comes to God's promises we feel hopeful that at least *He* will deliver.

The Old Testament Meets The New

In today's first reading the prophet Micah announces the great promise of God: that the small tribe which settled in the insignificant town of Bethlehem would one

day produce the ruler of Israel. But between that promise and its fulfilment there is a long interim period of destruction, suffering and exile. When your country is overrun and you are dumped in a strange land, when your songs are unsung and your musical instruments are in storage, it's difficult to hold on to a promise, even when that is the promise of God. But it's precisely that promise that gives substance to the hope of the people, and gives a direction to their lives. At the end of the exile, the remnant that still believes return to rebuild their lives in the hope that God will indeed keep His promises.

At beginning of Luke's Gospel we are introduced to an aged, married couple who stay alive on that hope – Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. They represent the hope that did not die, and they see it fulfilled in their son, John, who is to prepare for the one from Bethlehem. And it is the fulfilled hope of that old couple which is given to Mary as a sign: 'Know this too, your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son ... for nothing is impossible with God'.

Mary hurries to see this sign of hope fulfilled. In the meeting of the old Elizabeth and the young Mary, the Old Testament meets the New Testament, the ancient promise meets its fulfilment in two mothers: Elizabeth, the mother of the last great prophet who will go before the Lord; and Mary, the mother of the Lord Himself. It is a time of good news, of great blessing; it is a time for womb-shaking rejoicing. The old promises are new events, and now is the time of their long awaited fulfilment. It's a great time!

Sunday Parking

Please park with consideration for our neighbours. Last Sunday, during 11.00 am Mass one of the residents could not get the car out, and had to miss an appointment. Also, we need to keep the entrance to the car park free in the event of an emergency (ambulance etc.). We realise that the car park is small, and we appreciate your cooperation.