



ST. ED.

ADVENT 2017



NEWS FROM THE CATHOLIC PARISH
OF ST. EDMUND'S, BECKENHAM

The Divine Presence in Us

A glance at the world situation could often leave us with the feeling that, God who brought the world into existence has deserted it. The turbulent situation prevalent in the world, the refugee crisis and other events deficient in human love and respect, could call us to question the God that we believe in. While the hazy clouds loom over us, the season of Advent and the forthcoming feast of Christmas offer us hope and spiritual courage. Christmas is characterized by a season of waiting, yearning, expectation and longing (Advent), which is fulfilled by the *gloria in excelsis Deo* (Glory to God in the highest). The bright star of Christmas is the assurance of hope, joy, peace and unity offered in the little babe in the manger.

The season of Advent in the Christian calendar is a time of expectation and waiting – for the coming of God in the human person of Jesus. It is a waiting for the great feast of Christmas. The omnipresent, eternal One assumed human nature and was born in time. God became humanly present in Jesus. God became an integral part of human history, so that human history could continue to keep present, the presence of God. In a way, God humanizes himself in the event of Christmas. This humanizing is simultaneously a reminder that there is no chasm between God and the human person. We cannot divorce ourselves of the presence of God, and the call to live out the presence of God. The story of Christmas is a reminder that God is an essential part of us. We are graced by the presence of God. We are called to be the reflection of God's presence and love. It is a reminder that each person is an image of God in essence, even though we fail to live up to it. Since Jesus assumed our human nature and existence, he shares in our essence, make us sharers of divine essence. Our life is meant to be a divine spark, setting the lives of others aflame with God's presence, peace and love. Thomas Merton in his book '*No Man Is An Island*' says, "God, Who is everywhere, never leaves us. Yet, He seems sometimes to be present, sometimes to be absent. If we do not know Him well, we do not realize that He may be more present to us when He is absent than when He is present."

And so, Christmas is all about celebrating the presence of God in each of us. The Christmas fervour is often reduced to the 'presents' that we are called to think of. I am sure we all have been contemplating and looking for what presents we can source for our family members and friends. The presents are a good way of expressing our love and affection to those who matter most to us.

But, perhaps we could also pause and think whether the present, presents our presence to the other person or is only a thing, which is external to us. Does it make our presence palpable to the person who receives it? Does it impact the heart and soul of the receiver or is only another thing to adorn the house or the person?

The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of love and of generosity and of goodness. It should illuminate the soul. As Calvin Coolidge would remind us, "Christmas is not a time or season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas".

God in Jesus offers us His presence. He lives in us, accompanies us and comforts us. God offered us peace, joy, light and blessings in the great gift of Jesus. As we think of the Christmas presents this year, we could perhaps also think of making our presence, our goodwill, our love, our peace, our forgiveness an integral part of the present. It is then that we will truly live out the presence of God, which is our essence – the Divine presence in us.

Fr Simplicio De Souza



Remember you can watch services from our church live through our webcam, and also recordings of Sunday Masses and other major acts of worship - www.saintedmunds.net

Advent is the journey towards Christmas. You can make it a fun journey full of parties, mince pies and mulled wine. You can go to carol concerts and sing along with the throng. You can fill it with all sorts of goodies, as you may fill a Christmas stocking, but as Christians we all know that there's a lot more to Advent than this.

We are journeying to meet the Love of our life! To meet the one who can't wait till we open our eyes each morning to tell us that He loves us! THIS ONE HAS LOVED US SINCE BEFORE WE WERE BORN. He is head over heels in love with you and with me! If I *really* realised that this amazing lover is waiting for me at the end of my journey, shouldn't I be getting excited? Shouldn't I have a sense of longing?

But this longing can only start if I have fallen in love with Him in the first place! Jesus how can this happen, since I have no knowledge of You? After all, I can't make myself fall in love with You! No, I can't. It's all grace. The power of God will overshadow me if I say 'Yes!'

So, Lord here is my prayer: please help me to spend time with you every day during Advent. Show me what I need for this journey - a book? songs? music? But most of all Lord, give me the grace of longing for you. Amen.

Longing: An Advent Journey

On Tuesday, 28 November we welcomed Bishop Pat Lynch SS CC, along with Canon Tom McHugh, Fr Steve Wymer and Fr Mark Binang to Bishop Challoner School. The occasion was the unveiling of a portrait of Canon Jack Madden who was the Parish Priest at St Edmund's and Chairman of the Board of our school for almost 30 years.. There were also present a number of guests who were close friends of Canon Jack. It was a wonderful occasion which included a Memorial Mass, the blessing of the portrait and the blessing of a tree, planted in his memory.

Bishop Pat preached a moving homily about Canon Jack. He described him as a 'Good Shepherd', after the example of Christ, as one who leads, unites and cares. He explained that these qualities were evident in Canon Jack's ministry as he served in various parishes, at Bishop Challoner School and in the many other responsible positions he had held.

During the Mass the portrait by Jeff Stultiens was blessed and the school choir sang a beautiful rendition of a 'Gaelic Blessing' by Bob Chilcott. Bishop Pat thought that Canon Jack would have really appreciated this tribute, as he had fostered a particular love of nature, growing up in the 'Wild West' countryside of County Roscommon.

After the Mass guests gathered at the front of the school and Bishop Pat blessed a Ceanothus tree dedicated to Canon Jack's memory. This particular Ceanothus grows to about six feet tall but its branches can spread up to eight feet wide a reminder that Canon Jack's ministry was widespread. Also, the tree blooms with abundant blue flowers through, spring, summer and autumn, a further reminder of the fruitfulness of his ministry.

It was a pleasure to share such a joyful occasion with Canon Jack's close friends and to hear about all the good things that he had achieved in his life. Let us remember him in our prayers and give thanks for the wonderful work that he did on earth and let us ask him to pray for us who are still on the journey.

Gerard Lohan, May the road rise to meet you,

*May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be ever at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
And the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you, May God hold you
Ever in the palm of His hand.
The palm of His hand.*

Lyrics by Bob Chilcott based upon the Gaelic Blessing





*Christmas is coming,
the goose is getting fat,
please put a penny
in the old man's hat.
If you haven't got a penny,
a ha'penny will do,
if you haven't got a ha'penny,
then God bless you.*

This is one of the earliest of the many Christmas poems and songs I chanted as a child. My mother taught us children the words and it was easy to remember.

Two things never really dawned on us in those early years. The first is the fact that we never ate goose at Christmas or indeed at any other time and I still don't to this day. It has always been and will always be turkey.

The second point, which is by far the more important one to consider is the harsh reality of those people who live without. These individuals don't have enough for the basic necessities of life, the things that perhaps most of us take for granted.

The stark contrast between the fatted goose, soon to be a meal for a family able to afford it and those on the streets waiting for any coins that might come their way, is clear for all of us to see, and hopefully help to relieve.

However, what also strikes me about the poem is the line that speaks of the person who would like to give but can't. Such a person doesn't even have the tiniest amount to give away.

This caused me to reflect on the passage in the Bible (Luke 21:1-4) where Jesus is watching all the rich people putting their money into the temple treasury. Then he notices a poor widow putting in two small coins leaving herself with nothing.

Then he tells his disciples, *"I tell you truly, this poor widow has put in more than any of them; for these have all contributed money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in all she had to live on."*

God will bless us in generously giving from the very little we have and will go on blessing when we have no more to give.

Jesus draws our attention to the fact that the rich givers gave what they had left over while she gave all that she had to live on.

Fr Steve Wymer
Parish Priest

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST EDMUND'S 2017

All are welcome to attend any of our Christmas Masses

Sunday 24 December, Christmas Eve

Christmas Vigil Masses:

6.00 pm

6.00 pm at St Mary's School, Westgate Road

7.30 pm

Midnight Masses:

11.15 (start) Carols & Readings precede Midnight Mass

11.30pm (start) at St Mary's School, Westgate Road

Monday 25 December, Christmas Day

8.00 am

9.30 am

11.00 am



PARISH CONTACTS

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Masses at St.Edmund's
Sundays:
6.00 p.m. (Saturday Vigil)
8.00 a.m.
9.30 a.m. (Choir)
(Family Mass 4th Sunday)
11.00 a.m. (Chorale)
5.30 p.m. (Folk Choir)
7.00 p.m.

Weekdays:
10.00 a.m. (Mon - Sat) and
7.30 p.m.(Wed only)
27 Village Way
8.15 a.m. Mondays
Claver Convent
8.15 a.m. (Tues – Sat)
St Mary's School:
Fri 9.10 a.m. (term time only)

Holydays of Obligation:
(Vigil) 7.30 p.m.
7.30 a.m.; 10.00 a.m.;
12 noon; 8.00 p.m.

Confessions:
Saturday 10.30 – 11.30 a.m.
5.00 – 6.00 p.m.,
after evening Mass and at
other times - on request.



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