

NEWSLETTER



This newsletter contains details of the upcoming events of the new year, including Epiphanytide, together with news about our pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and of course the usual Vicar's letter, Fr Gregory's article, daily intentions for prayer and more.

Highlights of January

Monday 1st January

Naming & Circumcision of Jesus

Sung Mass 10am. *Followed by coffee and cake.*

Saturday 6th January

Epiphany of the Lord

High Mass 10am. Preacher: The Rev'd Andrew Hammond,
Chaplain of King's College, Cambridge

Tuesday 9th January

Forum Lunch *for dementia sufferers and their carers*

11.30am-3pm. *New cooks and helpers wanted (training given).*

See Bob DeWolf for info.

Wednesday 10th January

Monthly Healing Mass

10am *preceded by prayers for the sick at 9.45am in the Lady Chapel. All welcome to this meditative service where personal prayer & anointing with oil are offered during the Mass.*

Sunday 14th January

Epiphanytide Carol Service & Benediction

6pm including music by Marenzio, Mendelssohn and Howells.

Refreshments follow.

Thursday 18th – Thursday 25th January

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Each of the daily Masses during this week is offered for a different Christian Church or tradition. May we obey the Lord's will and prayer that all may be one.

Thursday 25th January

Feast of the Conversion of S. Paul

Low Mass 7.45am 10.30am Mothers' Union Prayers *in the Parish Centre*

11am Coffee *in the Parish Centre.*

Sung Mass 7pm *followed by refreshments*

From the Vicar

Christmas Saturday, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

‘Dry January’. The very phrase makes me feel unwell. This weekend’s newspapers will be a combination of retrospectives on 2017 and ‘New Year, New You’ articles about how to lose half your body weight in January by only consuming quinoa and black coffee. Hence, ‘Dry January’ – no booze. I can’t think of anything worse than spending the darkest and most depressing month of the year without a cheering glass of wine or beer.

The Church in her wisdom extends Christmas to Epiphany and then the Epiphany season right through to Candlemas at the beginning of February. So the Crib will be in church right through the month, for example.

Why does she do this? The first reason is that it takes time to appreciate things. If Christmas were over by Boxing Day (S. Stephen’s Day to give it the proper name) we’d barely have chance to ponder its astonishing message and meaning. I don’t know about you but the Maker of heaven and earth being born in a stable is something it will take me all the Christmases of my life to comprehend (and then some!). So we draw out these seasons to give us time truly to look at and inhabit them. Secondly, Christianity in the catholic tradition has always taught that God’s grace completes and perfects nature rather than ignoring or abolishing it. In other words, that there is no better time to celebrate the birth of the Sun of Righteousness than in the darkest season and it is no mere coincidence that a time of feasting is prescribed during the coldest and bleakest months of the year. It makes both natural and supernatural sense.

Thus we would be practically and spiritually foolish to hurl our Christmas tree in the bin as soon as we can and pour our wine down the sink or lock it away. We would be failing properly to honour the Lord’s birth and manifestation to the nations and we would make getting through the long dark nights even harder, with a bare house and no culinary cheer.

It’s worth noting, however, that there are good reasons for wanting Christmas to be over with. Not only is this a time when we tend to remember those we’ve lost but it is also a time when those who are lonely can feel especially so. Those quiet few days around Christmas when all the shops are shut and neighbours are away may seem like bliss to some of us but to others it is an annual ordeal when one’s loneliness is brought into stark relief.

I would hope therefore that our festivity would have two aspects to it that help to respond to these problems. The first is that we might keep an eye out for our neighbours and use our celebrations as a time to have them round for a drink or supper, for example. If there's someone we know is on their own (and doesn't want to be! solitude is not loneliness of course) the call of this season is to be their companion as Jesus comes to be ours – literally, one who shares bread with us. The second is to make sure that we avoid mere sentimentality at Christmas. I am always astonished at how many adults (without children) come to the children's service on Christmas Eve. Perhaps they feel that only by being a child again can they permit themselves to engage with Christmas. Who knows? Yet the saints we celebrate in the days immediately after Christmas Day teach us that this is not a festival just for children but for adults too – and those who are grieving especially. We mark the first Christian martyr, S. Stephen, and the murder of the Holy Innocents; so if Christmas is for you a time of remembering loss then you are not alone, and it is in the union of heaven and earth in Jesus and the defeat of death in His coming Passion that means that we need not be despairing as we recall those no longer bodily with us.

So while getting away from Christmas can seem understandable, I pray that an adult understanding of a feast that is so much more than angels and shepherds and being the recipients and givers of true festal hospitality, means that the impetus to throw ourselves into a puritan January is somewhat less. Dry January is good if you are an alcoholic but otherwise let's leave fasting for Lent when it comes (soon enough).

Even more, let us reflect on how feasting in January makes spiritual and natural sense and commit in 2018 to finding other ways to tie together the natural and supernatural, to see what grace and fulfil and complete nature and thus give back to God the great gifts He has given to us in our creation, redemption and the many means of grace.

With my love & prayers, I am,
yours in the Lord,

Fr Robert.

Elements of the Spiritual Life: I. Prayer

Fr Gregory writes: We are still celebrating Christmas and Epiphany, but the season of Lent is approaching so we should start our remote preparation. It is my hope that a short series of articles on the elements of the spiritual life (such as prayer, mortification, the Sacraments) will help us to deepen our relationship with God. In this first article I want to write about prayer.

The Christian life is essentially a life of union with God; but to make a relationship work it takes two people. The liturgical year reminds us of those great things God did for us to restore His loving relationship with us: we celebrate His incarnation, passion and death, His resurrection and ascension, the sending of the Holy Spirit. We remember with gratitude that He gave us the Holy Scripture, the Holy Church and the Sacraments. In Baptism He infused in us the gifts of faith, hope and charity; in the Eucharist He continues to dwell among us and unites Himself with us; in the Sacrament of Confession he restores us to our baptismal innocence; he inspires and strengthens us with His grace. He is really doing everything to “make this relationship work.”

But what about us? What should be our answer to such a generous love? What can we do to deepen our relationship with God? We must pray. But this seemingly simple answer hides a lot of difficulties, because it is not easy to pray! Even the most fervent, honest Christians struggle to have a proper prayer life and that is because too often we do not know what prayer is; on the contrary, we have a lot of misconceptions regarding prayer.

Many Christians say their prayers morning and night, in church, some even before meals, but most of these prayers are fixed texts learnt during childhood, in great part consisting of asking for something, and rarely do they have anything to do with our daily lives or personal circumstances. Often in these prayers there is an underlying, incorrect image of God: He is somebody distant (“up there somewhere”) who for some reason requires us to say prayers regularly. So we obey and, often distractedly, recite some prayers.

The first step towards a truly Christian prayer life is to have a correct image of God. It is true that “He dwells in unapproachable light” (I Tim. 6.16), is of infinite majesty, is absolutely transcendent and inconceivable; but He is also God-Emmanuel. Especially at the beginning of our spiritual life, when we pray, we should have in front of our eyes (mentally – but even physically, if it helps) the image of Jesus. God, while dwelling eternally in heaven, is also near; God once walked among men and now is present in the Eucharist; though being inconceivable, He Himself teaches us in the Gospels. God in Jesus Christ revealed Himself as a loving, caring presence, and this is how we should think about Him, especially during prayer. Prayer shouldn’t be seen as an obligation but as a chance to discover God’s presence in our life.

Another misconception is that prayer is mostly about petition. Consequently we pray more earnestly in moments of need while in other times, when everything is all right, we are less keen on prayer; and also, when our prayer seems not to be answered, we become discouraged, and we easily give up on prayer. Now, while it is important to ask both for ourselves and for others, petition is just one of the necessary elements of Christian prayer.

S. John Damascene says that prayer is “the lifting up of the mind to God.” Normally our mind is occupied with many things, important and not. We are easily tempted to bring these thoughts (at least the ones we think are important) to God in prayer. But the first step towards Christian prayer is putting all these thoughts aside. We do not come to God in prayer to say things, or to inform or update Him, not even to “say prayers” or to meditate “in His presence”; we do not come to God in prayer to think or to rest or to ask; we do not come to find consolation or strength or help or counsel. We come to God to find Him, to be with Him. It is because of Him, who He is, how He is, that we want to pray. As the Psalmist says: my heart said unto Thee: Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” (27.8). Everything else is secondary.

S. Augustine writes: “Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.” We were created to enter into intimate relationship with God through prayer, but sin happened, so as I said at the beginning, praying has become difficult for us. Putting our thoughts, joys, preoccupations aside is not easy. We have to learn and practise it. Prayer, on our part, requires preparation, perseverance and practice.

There are some simple, practical things that can facilitate prayer. It is important that we give sufficient time to prayer, every day, preferably at the same time of day. We should give to prayer the part of the day when we are at the top of our strength, when we are not too tired, sleepy, hungry, in a rush and so on. And do not start right away with prayer. It is almost impossible to switch to prayer from watching TV, talking to friends, surfing the net, reading a book, or fighting the Cambridge traffic. The first few minutes should serve to create silence around and inside us, putting aside all that occupies our thoughts. Try to create a special place for prayer (with whatever helps you: a cross, icon, candle) where you can be sure that you won't be disturbed by people, phone, or your cats, and where you are comfortable (kneeling on the floor for hours in pain in a cold and dark church is not for everybody).

Fr Gregory's article on prayer continues in February.



Calendar and Intentions

for

January 2018

*The list of Thanksgivings and Intercessions offers a focus
for our daily prayer, both at the Offices and Mass,
and in our personal times of prayer.*

*The Vicar would be glad of suggestions or
additions to the list of daily intentions.*

Calendar for January

Mon	1st	Naming and Circumcision of Jesus
Tue	2 nd	Ss Basil the Great & Gregory of Nazianzus, bishops & doctors
Wed	3 rd	
Thu	4 th	
Fri	5 th	
SAT	6th	EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
SUN	7th	BAPTISM OF CHRIST (1st Sunday of Epiphany)
Mon	8 th	
Tue	9 th	
Wed	10 th	<i>William Laud, Archbishop</i>
Thu	11 th	
Fri	12 th	S. Aelred of Rievaulx, Abbot
Sat	13 th	S. Hilary of Poitiers, Bishop
SUN	14th	SECOND SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
Mon	15 th	of Requiem
Tue	16 th	
Wed	17 th	S. Anthony of Egypt, Hermit & Abbot
Thu	18 th	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins (18 th -25 th)
Fri	19 th	S. Wulfstan, Bishop
Sat	20 th	
SUN	21st	THIRD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
Mon	22 nd	<i>S. Vincent, Deacon & Martyr</i>
Tue	23 rd	
Wed	24 th	S. Francis de Sales, Bishop & Doctor
Thu	25th	Conversion of S. Paul
Fri	26 th	Ss Timothy & Titus, Bishops
Sat	27 th	
SUN	28th	FOURTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
Mon	29 th	
Tue	30 th	S. Charles, King & Martyr
Wed	31 st	<i>S. John Bosco, Priest</i>

Daily Intentions and Anniversaries of death for January

Peace of the world	<i>Dorothy Ogden, Derek Williams</i>	1 st
Better teaching of the Christian Faith	<i>Daphne Peck</i>	2 nd
Those returning to work	<i>Edward Maycock, pr., Lena Wheatley, Arthur Clough</i>	3 rd
	<i>Cecilia Scott-Townsend</i>	
Shops and businesses in the parish	<i>Sheila Duffy</i>	4 th
Our outreach to non-Christians	<i>Jennifer Williams, Joyce Day, Peter Dicken</i>	5 th
That we may know God's glory	<i>Margaret Hulyer, Kathleen Holland</i>	6 th

Our Parish & People		7 th
All the baptized to know the great dignity of their baptism		8 th
The unemployed		9 th
The Archbishops of Canterbury & York	<i>Silvia Skeil</i>	10 th
The Cambridge Churches Homeless Project	<i>Geoffrey Baines</i>	11 th
Those suffering from eating disorders		12 th
Solicitors and barristers		13 th

Our Parish & People	<i>Aline Norman, Marjorie Shepherd, Elaine Wheatley,</i>	
<i>Timothy Cowell</i>		14 th
Faithful departed	<i>Isabel Nourse</i>	15 th
Returning students	<i>Marjorie Galletly</i>	16 th
The Church in Egypt	<i>Margaret Rowett</i>	17 th
Christian Unity		18 th
Roman Catholic Church	<i>Daphne Clavey</i>	19 th
Orthodox Churches	<i>Pauline Martindale, John Abraham, Donald Harris, pr.</i>	20 th

Our Parish & People	<i>Athelstane Furley</i>	21 st
Emmanuel & S. Columba's URCs		22 nd
Lutheran Churches	<i>James Rigney, pr.</i>	23 rd
Free & Pentecostal Churches	<i>Robert Garrett, pr., Peggy Hall</i>	24 th
Conversion of England		25 th
Mothers' Union	<i>Maurice Rayner, James Rone, pr.</i>	26 th
Medaille Trust	<i>Sebastian Hawkes, Elise Perrin, Peter Barnard</i>	27 th

Our Parish & People	<i>Julia Wheatcroft</i>	28 th
Calcutta Cathedral Relief Service	<i>Eric Furley, Beryl Goonetilleke</i>	29 th
The Sovereign	<i>Mary Hammond</i>	30 th
Society of S. Francis de Sales	<i>David Theobald</i>	31 st

Saints of January

2nd January – Ss Basil the Great & Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

Lord God, whose servants Basil and Gregory proclaimed the mystery of Thy Word made flesh, to build up Thy Church in wisdom and strength: grant that we may rejoice in His presence among us, and so be brought with them to know the power of Thine unending love; through Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Ss Basil and Gregory Nazianzen met when they were at school together in Athens, and they became close friends. Basil began a monastery, and Gregory joined him. Later, Basil became a bishop and had to leave the monastery. Eventually Basil, as an archbishop, appointed Gregory to be a bishop in a town that was not very faithful to the Church. Gregory was upset because he did not like conflict. But in loyalty to his friend, he forgave Basil, and the saints' friendship remained strong in their common love of Christ.

This common love of Jesus Christ found its supreme expression in their desire to promote and defend his divinity as proclaimed in the Nicene Creed. This was against the seemingly overwhelming pressure from both Church and State for the establishment of Arianism, which denied Christ's divinity and thus the whole Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Basil was renowned for being headstrong and forceful, in comparison to his friend Gregory, who would rather spend his days in prayer and living the simple, ascetic life. Gregory's brilliance in oratory and theological debate meant that a hidden life was virtually impossible and Basil drew him into the forefront of the controversy. Their joint persuasive eloquence convinced the first Council of Constantinople, meeting in 381, that their teaching was the truly orthodox one and the Council ratified the text of the Nicene Creed in the form it is used in the East to this day. S. Basil died in 379 and S. Gregory ten years later.



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 11th – 18th April 2018

Fr Robert writes: We have about 20 people signed up for our April pilgrimage, which is wonderful news. It's not too late to join – booking is still open!

As I've said before, going on pilgrimage to the Holy Land is one of those things that I believe every Christian who can afford it should do. It is often called the Fifth Gospel and with good reason – you truly understand that these people and places we read and speak about are real. Here are the answers to a few questions that you might have:

Is it safe? Yes, entirely. If it weren't we wouldn't be going and the very experienced firm we use (*Lightline*) would not put their name and business in peril by sending us anywhere dangerous. The dangerous parts are not places to which we will go (Gaza Strip, etc.)

How much walking is there? A bit, but we will be travelling in buses that can get us pretty close to the places we are visiting. There are certainly no great hikes. I've taken people in their late 80s before so worry not!

Do I have to share? No, although there is a single room supplement and obviously accommodation is not unlimited.

What's the weather like in April? It is sunny and warm, usually 15-20 Celsius.

How much does it cost? Full board, all flights, travel, entrance fees, etc.: £1,865.

For the full brochure go to:

www.lightline.org.uk/images/brochures/israel/2018/2018_mackley.pdf

**The Whitworth Trust presents:
a Burns' Night Cèilidh**

Friday 26/01/2018

St Giles' Church

Cambridge

8 - 11.30pm

Tickets: £10

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EPIPHANYTIDE CAROL SERVICE

Sunday 14th January at 6pm

Epiphany means 'manifestation' or 'revealing' and is the season when we look at who the child Jesus is. The Gentile Magi bring gifts of gold (for a king), incense (for God) and myrrh (for death) revealing more of this child's identity. On the feast of His Baptism, Jesus is revealed as God's Son, and in the water turned into wine on the third day at the wedding at Cana, He anticipates His Resurrection and the new Easter creation.

Our Epiphanytide Carol Service celebrates and explores these mysteries through readings from holy Scripture, some of the season's favourite carols and anthems by composers including Luca Marenzio, Felix Mendelssohn, Herbert Howells and more. It's all followed by refreshments as we continue to celebrate the birth and revelation of Jesus Christ. Don't miss it!

People for our Prayers

It is with great sadness that I report the death of **Alan Ashton**, Methodist Minister, member of our congregation (and flower arranger extraordinaire!) His funeral will be at 2pm on Friday 5th January at Wesley Methodist Church on the corner of Short Street and King Street. I'm delighted to report that both **Tim Wheatley** and **Daphne Foreman**, after nasty road accidents in December, are now making good recoveries. Daphne has had a new hip and is already making good progress with walking and Tim has now been moved to the intensive rehabilitation section of Addenbrooke's and has been able to receive Holy Communion. We continue to keep them both in our prayers.