

29th November 2020

First Sunday of Advent

I was just about to begin writing this newsletter when I received the news of the death of **Rita McDonagh RIP**. When I was appointed to this Church in 2005 Rita was already well established as editor of the newsletter. I estimate she edited the newsletter for almost twenty five years. She is remembered not just for the many years of service but also the very high standard and dedication to detail. She is very much missed. We give our condolences and support of prayers to Rita's family and many friends.

Editing the newsletter was only one of the many services Rita gave so generously to this parish over so many years. Organising, training and supporting the readers was another very visible service to which Rita gave her time and talents. However the more hidden contribution was perhaps the most significant. Rita reached out to and made great efforts to get to know many of the people who come to our Church. She stayed in contact with and corresponded with people who had moved elsewhere. In addition much of Rita's limited spare time was spent visiting house bound people and people in hospital and care homes. Rita was also very dedicated to attending funerals and especially funerals at which few or perhaps no one was expected to attend. I remember one occasion when Rita took a day off work to attend a funeral of someone she did not know very well but knew that few, if anyone, would be attending the funeral. I think two other ladies attended with her. May Rita rest in peace and we give thanks to God for the gift that Rita was to the people of this parish.

This Sunday is the beginning of the season of **Advent**. It is the beginning of the Church's year – this year it has more significance because hopefully this coming week we will re-open our Churches for Mass. Perhaps a way of seeing our experience this year is that we began Advent a month earlier: a waiting, a loss, an emptiness, but also a looking forward in hope and trust that something better awaits us. These are the themes that the season of Advent sets before us and we have been living them over the past month or perhaps since March.

The Prophet Isaiah expresses our experience very well in our first reading today: ***“You hid your face from us”***. That sums up how the past months have been for many people spiritually – Where is God in all of this? What is He doing? Why is He not answering our prayers? These are some of the many questions people have been asking this “hidden God”. Then the prophet goes on to remind us of the most fundamental of truths but one that we so often forget!; ***“Lord, you are our Father; we the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hands”***. May this Advent be a time of new life and blessings for all of us.

Fr. Matt Blake OCD

NOTICES

Church opening times

- Until Tuesday 1st December the Church is open for Private Prayer as follows:

8.30 – 9.30

11.00 – 12.00

4.30 – 5.30

- Beginning Wednesday 2nd December we can re-open the Church for Mass.

Our Church will be open at the following times:

Monday to Saturday: 7.45 – 9.00 11.30 – 1.00 4.30 – 6.30

Sunday: 8.15 – 9.00 9.30 – 11.00 11.30 – 1.00 4.30 – 6.45

The Church will be open on the same basis as before 5th November: social distancing, limited numbers, track and trace, cleaning and sanitizing, etc.

A very special thanks to all the stewards, without whose generosity and commitment opening of the Church would be impossible.

“Prayer in difficult times”

by Fr. Matt Blake OCD

The final talk will be this Monday 30th November 2020

10.00am and repeated at 8.00pm

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