

PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL & ST SIMON STOCK, CARMELITE CHURCH
41 KENSINGTON CHURCH ST., LONDON W8 4BB

Web: www.carmelitechurch.org
Tel. 0207 937 9866

Email: enquiries@carmelitechurch.org
Mobile: 0770 8203 595

Priests in the Parish: Fr Thaddeus Ekuma ocd, Fr Matt Blake ocd,
Fr John McGowan ocd, Fr Tijo Xavier ocd, Fr Theophilus Nyamali, ocd

.....
Second Sunday of Advent – 5th December 2021

Prayer as a School of our Advent Hope

Last week's Wednesday was the conclusion of our parish synodal discussions. Outside of Mass, the synod was probably our first communal engagement since the pandemic broke out about two years ago. The synod was a moment of grace which the pandemic itself had helped to shape. Each of us shared how the pandemic had challenged or helped our faith. And for many people, bad as it was, the pandemic had initiated an opportunity for spiritual awakening as they found themselves alone and with much more time than they would usually have. The longing to get together with others was intense. It would appear that in that period of lockdown and isolation something significant had been born in each of us. We individually longed for God and more than before realized the need for community. Prayer was born.

We may describe our advent journey as a journey of longing and hope just as our scripture readings describe the hopes of the people of Israel when they longed for the Messiah in their days. Those sentiments of longing were aspects of Israel's prayer as we hear them voiced out by the ancient prophets and the Psalmist. In other words, there is a strong link between prayer and hope.

Today I would like to share with you the following excerpt from the Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI on Christian hope which aptly describes hope as the basis of prayer.

"A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer. When no one listens to me anymore, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, he can help me (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2657).

Saint Augustine, in a homily on the First Letter of John, describes very beautifully the intimate relationship between prayer and hope. He defines prayer as an exercise of desire. Man was created for greatness - for God himself; he was created to be filled by God. But his heart is too small for the greatness to which it is destined. It must be stretched. "By delaying [his gift], God strengthens our desire; through desire he enlarges our soul and by expanding it he increases its capacity [for receiving him]". Augustine refers to Saint Paul, who speaks of himself as straining forward to the things that are to come (cf. Ph 3:13). He then uses a very beautiful image to describe this process of enlargement and preparation of the human heart. "Suppose that God wishes to fill you with honey [a symbol of God's tenderness and goodness]; but if you are full of vinegar, where will you put the honey?" The vessel, that is your heart, must first be enlarged and then cleansed, freed from the vinegar and its taste. This requires hard work and is painful, but in this way alone do we become suited to that for which we are destined. Even if Augustine speaks directly only of our capacity for God, it is nevertheless clear that through this effort by which we are freed from vinegar and the taste of vinegar, not only are we made free for God, but we also become open to others. It is only by becoming children of God, that we can be with our common Father. To pray is not to step outside history and withdraw to our own private corner of happiness. When we pray properly we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well. In prayer we must learn what we can truly ask of God - what is worthy of God. We must learn that we cannot pray against others. We must learn that we cannot ask for the superficial and comfortable things that we desire at this moment - that meagre, misplaced hope that leads us away from God. We must learn to purify our desires and our hopes. We must free ourselves from the hidden lies with which we deceive ourselves. God sees through them, and when we come before God, we too are forced to recognise them. "But who can discern his errors? Clear me from hidden faults" prays the Psalmist (Ps 19:12 [18:13]). Failure to recognise

my guilt, the illusion of my innocence, does not justify me and does not save me, because I am culpable for the numbness of my conscience and my incapacity to recognise the evil in me for what it is. If God does not exist, perhaps I have to seek refuge in these lies, because there is no one who can forgive me; no one who is the true criterion. Yet my encounter with God awakens my conscience in such a way that it no longer aims at self-justification, and is no longer a mere reflection of me and those of my contemporaries who shape my thinking, but it becomes a capacity for listening to the Good itself.”

Let our hopes this period be our prayer.

NOTICES

Our Parish Synodal Pathway Concluded – Thank You

We would like to thank all those who participated in our parish synod and made it a huge success. The fruits of our discussion will be shared with everyone at a later date.

Parish Advent Retreat - Preparing for Christmas with Carmelite Saints

On Monday, December 13th to Friday, December 17th at 5.00pm we will have our parish advent retreat. The retreat will consist of a short talk at 5.00pm followed by exposition of Blessed Sacrament and confessions, and end with mass at 6.00pm. Everyone is welcome to join either in person or on live-stream or YouTube. The retreat will be led by Fr. Matt Blake OCD

Christmas Mass Times

Friday 24 th December (Christmas Vigil):	4.30pm, 6.00pm & 9.30pm
Saturday 25 th December (Christmas Day):	8.30am , 10.00am, 12.15pm, 6.00pm Mass will be the vigil Mass for Sunday (Feast of the Holy Family)

Christmas Confessions: 22 nd December:	11.00am – 12.00noon & 5.00pm – 6.00pm
23 rd December:	11.00am – 12.00 noon & 5.00pm – 6.00pm
24 th December:	11.00am – 12.00 noon & 3.30pm – 4.30pm

Christmas Carol on 18th December

At 7.00pm on 18th December, there will be Christmas carol here in our Church. Everyone is invited as we sing in anticipation of our Christmas joys.

Parish Christmas Giving & Get-Together

We have set up a Christmas tree at the back of the church. From Sunday, 12th December papers displaying items required for our Christmas giving will be on the tree and anyone who is moved can provide one or more of the items as a Christmas gift for the less-privileged. On **21st December after the 6.00pm Mass**, if COVID threats permit, we will get together as a parish for some food, drinks and cakes during which we will give the gift to the less-privileged. If for COVID reasons we cannot get together, we will simply distribute the gifts.

Volunteers' Evening

The 6.00pm Mass on the 8th of December, which is also the conclusion of the Year of St Joseph, will be a Thanksgiving Mass for volunteers, readers, Eucharistic ministers and all those who help in the parish. After the Mass there will be food and drinks in the hall to celebrate the work of all our volunteers, ministers and helpers. Please do mark the date while we continue to monitor the developing COVID situation.

<u>Collections Last Sunday</u>	Offering	£1270
	Gift Aid Envelopes	£139

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Thaddeus, OCD