SUNDAY NEWSLETTER

Fourth Sunday of Advent (C) **22nd December 2024**

PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL & ST SIMON STOCK, CARMELITE CHURCH
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Mass Times Sundays: Vigil (Sat.) 6.00 p.m., 8.30 a.m., 10.00 a.m., 12.15 p.m. & 6.00 p.m.
Weekdays (including Bank Holidays): 8.00 a.m., 12.15 p.m. & 6.00 p.m.
Livestream *(All Masses)*: www.carmelitechurch.org & YouTube: "Kensington Carmelite Church"
Confessions: Sat: 11.30 a.m. – 12.15 p.m. & 5.00 - 5.50 p.m. Weekdays: 5.40 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.
Priests in the Parish: Fr Thaddeus Ekuma, Fr Matt Blake, Fr John Williamson, Fr Joseph Odiahi
Safeguarding Rep: Franca Bren

Reflection

THE LORD IS NEAR

We have switched, as it were, to the landing gear in our advent preparations. From 17th December, the tone of our liturgy accelerated to a high pitch of imminency: 'The Lord is near.' It is as if we're being told to buckle our seat belts, open the window blinds, fold up the tray tables and switch off all devices capable of interrupting communications; it is time to brace up for the possibility of the unusual. What is going to happen at Christmas is in every sense unusual. And today the Prophet Micah in our first readings hints at that unusualness by declaring that out of Bethlehem, the least of the clans of Judah, will be born the one who is to rule Israel. God's ways have always been somewhat unusual. His choices are difficult for us to understand. Yet we cannot ask why, because there are no 'whys' to God's choices and actions, as Isaiah tells us: can a vessel question its fashioner as to what he has created? That is why we're told that Mary's question at the annunciation was 'how?' not 'why?' How can this come about, she said?

In the evangelist Matthew's account of the genealogy of Jesus we encounter some strange names. We find something that we would have liked to expunge from Jesus' genealogy. Jesus whom Matthew will eventually demonstrate through several stories that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, he also wants to show that he is nevertheless the son of David, son of Abraham and son of Joseph. But according to the Jews, when the Messiah appears no one will know where he comes from. Among those mentioned in this account are 4 women, which is very unusual because women are never mentioned in typical Israelite genealogies. And, not only that. These women are also all gentiles (and for the Christian Jews, for whom Matthew is writing, gentiles are not included in the economy of salvation). To make matters worse, one of these women, Bat-Sheva (the mother of Solomon), was forcefully snatched from her husband, Uriah, whom David had set up to be killed in a battle. Yet, by this inclusion of Uriah's wife in the account, the evangelist is introducing us to the very thing that Jesus is going to be dealing with, and that is human weakness and sin, for in a later verse, he translates the name 'Jesus' as 'one who will save his people from their sins.' And by including these gentile women, he also brings to our attention the universality of the salvation that Jesus will bring.

When we listen to the events of Christmas, we learn more about God's strange ways, including the poor circumstances of Jesus' birth

and the simplicity of the people (the shepherds) who first greeted his birth. But God has purposes in his choices. Pope St Leo the Great notes that 'the Son of God in his omnipotence could have taught and sanctified us by appearing to us in a semblance of human form without actually becoming human. But his victory over sin would have profited us nothing if the battle had been fought outside of our human condition.

In our lives, there are occasions when we want to ask God why? Those situations that don't seem to fit into the plan of our life, things that are not as we expect them, we see the chaos of history, the tensions and anxieties of our world. But in all of these, we know that questioning God is futile because no matter how we try, we cannot entirely comprehend God's ways. But we are assured that in whatever happens, God is with us, for that is what His name will be called (Immanuel). So, even as we cannot comprehend God's ways, we must trust in his purposes which he has well-crafted from the beginning of time. 'Happy the ones who do not lose faith in him,' the gospel tells us.

So as we prepare for the mystery of the birth of God, let us once again experience the table of the Eucharist which we share as the greatest sacrament of God's presence with us, an assurance of peace and salvation which he brings for us and the whole world. For, 'in his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails.'

NOTICES

To follow the Mass Readings on your phone, please scan the QR Code:

CHRISTMAS MASS

Christmas Eve (Tuesday 24th Dec.)	6.00pm (Vigil Mass of Christmas)
Christmas Nativity Mass (Midnight)	12.00 midnight (Professional Choir starting with carol at 11.15pm)

Note: There may be no bus service after the midnight Mass but there is free parking around the church on this day.

Christmas Day (Wednesdayday 25th Dec.)	8.30am, 10.00am, 12.15pm & 6.00pm
Days following Christmas	Masses as usual on Weekdays (8.00am, 12.15pm, 6.00pm) and Sundays (8.30am, 10.00am, 12.15pm & 6.00pm)

CHRISTMAS DINNER IN THE PRIORY

Those who signed up for the dinner in the priory on Christmas day are reminded that it starts at 3.00pm

PARISH CHRISTMAS GIVING

Every year, close to Christmas, we go out on the streets to make small gift donations to people on the streets. Anyone who would like to donate food vouchers or cash for such may do so during this week. Please speak to any of the priests after the mass or to the reception during the week. On 20th December, the donated gifts will be offered to the less-privileged.

You may make your offering or donation by scanning this QR Code with your mobile phone
Thank you and God bless!

Collections Last Sunday:	Offering	£1693
	Gift Aid Envelopes	£117

Thank you for your generosity!

Fr Thaddeus, OCD