

# Christmas Message

THE WORD

Year C



## THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

The Christmas Gospel (Luke 2:1-14 used at Midnight Mass) must be one of the world's best-known stories. Stripped of the sentimental additions it has acquired over the years, it tells a story of hardship and uncertainty, yet it holds out a message of hope. A homeless young couple, far from their families and friends, give birth to their first child in the corner of a stable shared with domestic animals. The baby's first visitors are not adoring grandparents or aunts and uncles, but some curious shepherds whose night watch had been disturbed by angels telling them to go in search of a newborn child in the town of Bethlehem. In the animals' food trough lies a child, wrapped tightly in bands of cloth, the baby clothes of the poor. The shepherds have been told that this child was the new King David, Israel's legendary hero who had been anointed as King of Israel in this very town a thousand years before. Despite the promises made to him by God, David's royal line appeared to have petered out, as Israel became a colony, now of one superpower, now of another. ■

### LEARN

The great truth of Christmas is that in a frail child, God has taken on our humanity.

The other side of that mystery is that Christ shares his divine being with us.

The prayer the priest says as he puts the drop of water into the chalice (see below) is a reminder of this mystery.

### DO

Visit the crib in a church this week and allow your imagination to recreate the scene.



### SAY

**By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.**

## REFLECT

Christmas is a time for poetry and song. One of the best-known English Christmas poems was written by a poet called John Betjeman. It begins as a light-hearted, and even slightly mocking account of Christmas most of us will recognise from experience. Gift-giving at Christmas has become so compulsory that surly teenagers spend their cash on gifts, even if they are just "bath salts and inexpensive scents and hideous tie (so kindly meant)". Betjeman is a believer. In all the gift-giving and good spirits of the season, he wonders, has the most important gift of all been forgotten:

*And is it true, and is it true,  
This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained glass window's hue,  
A baby in an ox's stall?*

He knows that the child in the manger went on to become the Saviour of humanity. His presence in our story was not confined to a poor down-trodden land for a few decades at the beginning of the first century of our era, but "God was man in Palestine, and lives today in bread and wine."

The old English name for today's feast was originally two words – Christ Mass – the Mass at which we celebrated the birth of Christ. The Mass is integral to the celebration of today's feast. Apart from All Souls, it is the only feast that has three distinct Masses celebrated at different times during the day, from midnight until midday.

One of the finest sermons in history was preached at midnight Mass in Rome one Christmas in the middle of the fifth century by Pope St Leo the Great. All these years later, it still catches something of the great mystery of Christmas. "Christian, acknowledge your dignity, and becoming a sharer in God's nature. Do not go back to an old way of life. Remember who is the Head of the Body of which you are a member. Remember that you were rescued from the power of darkness and brought out into God's light and kingdom. By the mystery of baptism you became the temple of the Holy Ghost: do not put such a guest to flight by sinful acts, or make yourself once more a slave of the devil. You were purchased by the blood of Christ. He will judge you in truth, the one who ransomed you in mercy." ■

**Our Lady & St Edmund of Abingdon**  
**1 Radley Rd, Abingdon on Thames, Oxon, OX14 3PL**

Parish Priest:	Fr. Jamie McGrath	Tel: 01235 520375
Assistant Priest	Fr. Rob Stewart	Tel: 01235 520375
Parish Secretary:	Lisa Paterson	Tel: 01235 520375
Office Hours:	9am-12pm Monday to Friday	
Office Email:	abingdon@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk	
<i>We live stream most services (the 10.15am Mass on the first Sunday of every month is not live streamed).</i>		
Youth Worker:	Melanie Parris-Dollar E: tipayouth@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk	Tel.07470 094818
Safeguarding Team:	Tel. 07572 935 230	
Visits at JR Hospital:	Fr Pius 01865 221732	
Visits and Help:	Society of Vincent de Paul Group, contact via Parish Office	
Parish Website:	www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk	
Primary School:	St. Edmund's School, Radley Road, Abingdon, OX14 3PP Tel 521558	
Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Reg. Charity No 246871	www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk	

**Confessions: 11.00 – 11.30am or by appointment**

### Happy Christmas!

We welcome you all today to celebrate the birth of our Saviour. May all our families and friends be blessed with the peace His coming brings. Fr. Jamie, Fr. Rob.

### Welcome!

Welcome to those who have stopped practicing their Catholic Faith regularly but are here in the Church for Christmas. Many people return to the Church after a period of time, as they sense a spiritual emptiness in their lives which only Christ can fill. We are really pleased that you are here and hope you will come again. It is normal to have questions about various aspects of faith and life and we would be very happy to listen and talk to those who would like this. Please just ring the parish number or email the parish office. You might also like to consider coming and trying the Alpha course, where every question is appreciated and there is a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.

### Prayer for Returners

Jesus, send your Holy Spirit into my heart in this moment. I need to experience You afresh and receive Your healing and forgiveness.

Enter my heart now. Many different memories, emotions and experiences lie hidden there.

Please come with Your light. Thank you that You are near. Give me the courage to respond to the invitation which is being given to me.

Amen.

### Parish Life

**Parish Office** is now closed until Thurs 27<sup>th</sup> December.

**Advent Collection for the Homeless** This Advent we are collecting the following items for the homeless in Oxford SHAMPOO, TOOTHPASTE, SOAP, NEW SOCKS

The items will be delivered weekly to a hostel for the homeless in Oxford. There is a box for your donations at the back of the Church. With Grateful Thanks.

**The Alpha Course** returns to our Parish this January

### CHRISTMAS

#### Tuesday 25 December THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

8am	Mass	Richard Son Intentions
9.30am	Mass	John McCann RIP
11.30am	Mass	Philip Snoxall RIP

#### Wednesday 26 December ST STEPHEN

12noon	Mass	Isabella Rose Paterson Intentions
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**N.B** No evening Mass

#### Thursday 27 December ST JOHN

9am	Rosary	
9.30am	Mass	Private Intention

#### Friday 28 December THE HOLY INNOCENTS

6.30pm	Rosary	
7pm	Mass	Private Intention

#### Saturday 29 December ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

11am	Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament	
11-11.30am	Confessions	
12 noon	Mass	In Thanksgiving Andres Kolb

2019. If you are interested in attending or you know someone who might be interested, please contact Maeve on 01865 321179. The Course will be running at my home in Kennington, commencing Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> of January from 11am - 12.30 pm. All are welcome.

**Parish Lent Project 2019** Looking ahead to the Lent Project 2019, do you wish to propose a charity? While thinking this Advent and Christmas season about those who are less fortunate than we are, please think about whom you would like the parish to help through our next Lent Project and send your proposal to the Parish Council, through the parish office by Friday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019. Many thanks.

The RCIA Group resumes on 15<sup>th</sup> January.

### Faith Development

**Everyone is invited** to join in The traditional Christian Aid New Year's Day Walk on 1st January 2019 from 10am Meeting place Peachcroft Christian Centre Route Sunningwell / Bayworth Distance 6 miles or 9.5K Refreshments at Bayworth Baptist Chapel. The route map still costs just £1 available on the day. If you wish to be sponsored please contact anyone on the Christian Aid Committee or refer to Christian Aid website for a sponsorship form.

**Emmaus Oxford** Emmaus Oxford is open every day of the year, and Christmas day is no exception. We give homeless people a place to live, meaningful work and a purpose. As our Companion Terry told us, "Emmaus is there for everyone, every day of the year". You can help us to make Christmas a happier time for homeless people by donating at [www.emmaus.org.uk/oxford](http://www.emmaus.org.uk/oxford)

**Abingdon Passion Play** Following the very enjoyable and successful New Year's Eve Party in 2015; now, three years on, the event will be repeated this year on December 31<sup>st</sup> at Trinity Church Hall (Conduit Rd, Abingdon) 8:30pm to 1:00am to raise funds for the Abingdon Passion Play that will take place on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2019 in the Abbey Grounds. The Party, offering a 3 Course Meal + Celebratory Drink, Entertainment and Dancing all for £20 per person. Tickets, available from Anne Green Ab. 520171, The Bookshop in the Precinct Abingdon, or on-line at [www.abingdonpassionplay.org.uk](http://www.abingdonpassionplay.org.uk), must be purchased in advance.

**Association of Christian Counsellors Annual Conference: Embodied Hope.** If you are a student or qualified counsellor or working pastorally with people (including in spiritual direction or supervision roles), then this conference will offer a rich programme covering a mix of psychological, spiritual and Christian perspectives on a wide variety of different topics relevant to counselling and pastoral care. You will also find opportunities for personal development and restoration, creative practices and worship. The conference programme is split into the following streams - and it is possible to mix and match over the four days from 8 to 11 February 2019: Counselling Practice Skills & Knowledge; Hope, Faith & Spirituality; Body Work Psychotherapy; Working with diversity: LGBT+; Pastoral Care; Self-Development, Retreat & Restoration. For further information and to book, go to [www.acc-uk.org](http://www.acc-uk.org).

## Parish Events for the Week

N.B. All take place in the Parish Centre unless specified

### Future Diary Dates

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec and 1<sup>st</sup> Jan** Parish Office closed

**9<sup>th</sup> Jan** Cake & Conversation resumes

**11<sup>th</sup> Jan** Baby & Toddler Group resumes

### Youth Events

*More info: [tipayouth@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:tipayouth@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)*

## Love at Christmas

**based on 1 Corinthians 13, by Sharon Jaynes**

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to help one's wife with the boring housework. Love puts the Christmas present shopping on hold in order to run an elderly neighbour to the doctor.

Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love doesn't envy another's home that has more expensive presents or even coordinated Christmas china and table linen.

Love doesn't yell the children to get out of the way. Love is glad that they are there to be in the way. Love doesn't only give to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, even irritating relatives. It believes all things, and encourages teenagers to aim high for their future. It hopes all things, endures all things, even a spouse who is depressed about their job prospects.

Love never fails other people. Computer games will crash, even cashmere jumpers will wear out, and golf clubs will get lost. But the gift of love will endure forever.

**Money Matters:** 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2018  
Not available