



BLESSED SACRAMENT

PARISH NEWS

19 December 2021. Fourth Sunday of Advent. Year C



Listen! You are to conceive and bear a Son

It's only in this last week before Christmas that we begin to hear about the 'Christmas story' itself. For the past weeks we have been preparing ourselves to greet the Lord, when he comes. Now we prepare to remember how he first came, by listening to the prophecies of his coming, and by hearing of the events before his birth. We meet the woman, Mary, who herself had been prepared for the coming of the Messiah.

She has received the angel's greeting, and his strange news, and has accepted her role in God's plan. Now she hurries to her kinswoman, Elizabeth, who herself bears John the Baptist in her womb. John, just as we heard last week, alerts us to the presence of the Lord, as he leaps for joy in his mother's womb. His joy is that God has kept his promise, and is with his people.

God of Surprises

I'm not a great lover of surprises. Maybe it's my age, but I prefer to know what's going on, especially if it concerns me!

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas once more we are perhaps hoping there will be no surprises; that gifts will be delivered on time; that the weather won't scupper our visiting plans; that the dinner will be cooked!

And yet we've become used to being surprised. The pandemic which we've lived with now for nearly two years has meant we are never really quite sure what will happen next. We've got used to announcements which force us to change our plans at the last minute. We've been surprised by the behavior, both good and bad of those we live alongside. We're surprised that we are still in this situation.

Christmas is a time of surprise. No one knew the year, the day or the time when God would enter our world in the form of a baby and change history for ever. It was a surprise to the ruling authorities of Temple and State. It was a surprise to the shepherds who were the first to hear the news, but it was perhaps most surprising for Mary. This simple, gentle maiden was visited from on high and told she was to be the Mother of God. Surprising? Terrifying, confusing and challenging!

Our God is a God of surprises. The method he chose to save the world did not follow any of the predictions. The people expected a warrior Messiah to fight for liberation, a King to take his place on the throne and rule with mighty hand. Instead a baby was born in a stable and laid in a manger; a baby who would grow into a man who preached love, peace and joy; a man who would suffer and die on a cross.

I hope and pray that God will surprise you this Christmas. Look out for him in all you experience; the joy of family, the kindness of strangers, the beauty of the liturgy, even in the loneliness of isolation, fear and anxiety he will be there.

It's not really a surprise, because he told us so: 'I will be with you to the end of time'. Emmanuel means God IS with us, not God was with us or God will be with us, God IS with us. The most surprising thing is that we forget!

HAPPY CHRISTMAS. *Fr Jonathan*

Christmas Greetings

Fr Jonathan and Fr John would like to wish you all a very Happy and Holy Christmas. It has been a challenging year for all of us but we are immensely grateful for your kindness and friendship, your love and care. God bless you all.

Sunday 26 December

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph



Jesus is found by his parents sitting among the doctors

As an example for us to follow, the Holy Family can seem a little too perfect: when we consider the more 'dramatic' events of the Christmas and Easter story, it can seem so far removed from us. And yet, as today's Gospel reminds us there were also the so-called 'hidden years' - the many years of family life in Nazareth, spent in ordinary things. During that time, we hear how Jesus grew and matured, and in the glimpse of that family life we see our example. Our celebration of this feast announces that there is a lasting value in the ideals of family life, and the relationship between husband, wife, parents and children. Whatever the changing details of each age, honour, understanding and love always remain the recipe for the perfect, and holy, human family. It is love that we put on over all the other clothes of changing cultures and places, to guarantee the life of the family in imitation of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

January 6 The Epiphany of the Lord



We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage

In the East, this Season of Christmas is called the 'Time of Manifestation', or Showing. Today is the 'Feast of the Manifestation', or the Showing of the Saviour to the whole world, to all nations. In the wise men who travel from the East, we see all the nations other than the people of Israel being welcomed at the New Temple of the New Covenant - the new born child in the manger.

A look at the Psalm response shows this: 'All nations shall fall prostrate before you, O Lord.' The same is true of the key word in the second reading: 'Revelation'. Remember that for the people of Israel this was to be their Messiah, come to restore their fortunes. By this feast, we proclaim God's plan was to extend his salvation to men and women of every nation, of every time and every place - including us. In many ways this is our Christmas Feast, when we celebrate the Good News of the Saviour's birth revealed at last to us.

CAFOD Afghanistan Crisis Appeal

CAFOD is combining efforts with the DEC to launch the Afghanistan Crisis Appeal. In Afghanistan, 8 million people are on the brink of famine because of drought, collapsing economy, food shortages, conflict, and COVID. CAFOD is supporting sister Caritas agencies to reach communities most in need with food, clean water, and fuel. During Advent, when we open ourselves to the needs of others, let's do all that we can to save lives. You can donate on the CAFOD website: cafod.org.uk/AfghanistanAppeal Please pray for the people of Afghanistan.

Christmas Mass Times

Christmas Eve 24 December Vigil Mass 6.00pm **FULLY BOOKED**

Midnight Mass at Midnight *NB There will be no Vigil of Carols and Readings this year.*

Christmas Day 25 December 8.45am

Christmas Day 25 December 10.45am **FULLY BOOKED**

Sunday 26 December 8.45am and 10.45am *No evening Mass*

Monday 27 December 9.30am

Tuesday 28 December 9.30am

No Mass Wednesday 29 December

Thursday 30 December 9.30am

Friday 31 December 6.30pm followed by Holy Hour for the New Year

Booking for Christmas Masses

If you are intending to come to Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day you will need to book a place. There are still a few places at Midnight Mass and the 8.45am Mass on Christmas morning. The others are fully booked. There is no need to book for the Sunday Masses. Please email or phone the Parish Office as soon as possible telling us the number of places you would like to reserve and for which Mass. Please only book if you are sure that you will be attending. If you are unable to attend a Mass that you have booked places for please let us know in plenty of time to enable us to allocate the places to someone else. Many thanks.

Wednesday Word Scripture Reflection

This week (15 Dec) was the last week we will meet until the New Year. We will have a 2 week break over the Christmas period and begin meeting again on Wed 5 January. We will continue to meet online via zoom from 2.00-3.00pm. If you would like to join us then, please get in touch with Maria: exeter-pastoral-assistant@prcdtr.org.uk. Please note that you do not need to make a weekly commitment and a warm welcome will await you whenever you can come.

Synod 2021-2023 Walking Together

Taking part: You can join in the process in two ways:

2.00pm Church and St Richard Reynolds Centre

Just come along. You may like to invite someone else to join you, a member of your family, a Catholic friend or someone you know used to come to church. It's important that we invite as many voices as possible to be heard.

5.00pm Zoom meeting

To receive a link for this meeting please email Maria at exeter-pastoral-assistant@prcdtr.org.uk You will receive a link to the meeting at 4.45pm on the Sunday to enable you to join. You might like to suggest this way of meeting to someone who is housebound or would prefer to stay at home. You could perhaps offer to help with the technology.

Theme 4 - Dream

This week our Walking Together journey has a focus on Dream. "In his freedom, the Holy Spirit knows no borders, nor does He allow Himself to be limited by memberships. If the parish is home to all in the neighbourhood, not an exclusive club, I recommend: leave the doors and windows open...Allow all to enter..." Pope Francis. We are invited to reflect this week on what is Gods dream for us and our Parish? How might our parish 'walk better together'? We are also asked to consider, in the light of the last 18 months living with Covid and your reflections on the four themes, what are we most looking for from the Church/Diocese moving forward?

If you are not able to attend a parish listening event, you can find all the materials and guidance about how to send through your thoughts and views on the Diocesan website <https://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/key-documents/parish-resources/> If you have any questions you can email synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk or [here](#)

A Listening Church

Please see in the church, or from the parish office, hard copies of materials aimed at those who may not participate in parish events. Part of the listening phase is to gather views from a wide variety of people and not just Catholics. Please use this material to gather the views of your friends and family, we want to hear from as many people as possible.

Prayer for the Synod

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity So that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen

Christmas Offering

As is customary, collections at Christmas Masses are our personal gift to the parish clergy. Please use one of the special Christmas Envelopes you will find as you leave church. If you are unable to attend Mass and would still like to make an offering this can be made by a cash donation or a bank transfer. Please contact Lesley in the Parish Office who can let you have the information that you require to make a bank transfer. For those who already have the parish bank details and wish to make an offering please make sure that you add 'Christmas offering' in the description field. If you wish to make a cash or cheque (made payable to PRC DTR Heavitree RC Parish) offering please place it in an envelope and mark it 'Christmas Offering' and put through the presbytery letterbox or in the offerings basket as you leave any Mass that you attend over the Christmas period.

Your Offering

We are grateful for your continued generosity to the parish. **Please remember that the most efficient way for you to give is by standing order.** Forms are available by emailing or phoning the parish office. Arrangements are made directly with your bank. And if you can, please GiftAid your contribution.

St Nick's News

The staff and children of St Nicholas School wish all parishioners a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

To find out about joining St Nicholas or to arrange a tour please contact the Senior Administrator, Mrs Brocksom, (abrocksom@stncls.uk).

Parish News

This week's Parish News covers the next three weeks. There will not be another Parish News until Sunday 9 January 2022.

Our Christmas Tree and Exeter Foodbank

Our Christmas tree is now in the church and you will find that there are already tags on it. These all include written on them items the Foodbank has prioritised. You are invited to take a tag and purchase that item and return it to the church and place it under the tree. We will be continuing to do this throughout Christmastide. Many will benefit from your generosity.

Youth Event

Fancy meeting other Catholics across our diocese? Youth events are running a residential at Heatree, Dartmoor. It is a great opportunity for young people across the diocese to come together and have some fun together. A chance to explore Dartmoor, enjoy outdoor activities such as climbing and abseiling, share stories whilst sat around the campfire and explore faith in our lives. From 18 to 20 February 2022 £95 all inclusive. This event is aimed at young people aged 10 (year 6) to 17 (year 13). To secure a place a £30 deposit must be received by 9 January 2022. To book contact Saskia: youth@prcdtr.org.uk

Parent & Toddler Group

After a great few weeks the Parent and Toddler group had their last meeting of this year and they welcomed Father Christmas for a visit which was a great success! The toddlers were a bit shy, but nobody cried! They enjoyed opening their presents and it was a really nice experience for all of the parents too. The group is taking a break over the Christmas period but they will meet again on Monday 10 January 2022. If you or someone you know is interested in coming along please register using this [link](#). Booking is essential as numbers are limited.

The Night Journey

Fr Robbie Lowe, a priest of the diocese, has written a lovely new Christmas children's book, 'The Night Journey'. It is a beautiful reflection on the Mass which leads us to the manger and the child in the arms of Mary. It is beautifully illustrated by Jan Burrell and begins and ends in the parish church and family home. It would make a great Christmas gift for children, grandchildren or Godchildren. Books cost £7.50 and are still available from the Parish Office.

Caritas

Please follow the link to find the Caritas latest newsletter can be found by following this link [here](#)

Caritas Homelessness Event

Caritas Plymouth would like to invite you to an online event on homelessness on the 18 January 2022 from 6.00-7.00pm. As Britain emerges from the crisis of pandemic and begins to come to terms with the impacts of the crisis over the last few years, the effects on homelessness are likely to be significant. It is predicted that the economic aftermath of COVID-19 risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping. This event will offer an opportunity for prayer and reflection on how we can take practical action to support those who are homeless. Please register using the following link: [here](#) or email caritasprcdtr.org.uk

Pope's December prayer intention

Prayer intention for evangelisation – Catechists. Let us pray for the catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God: may they be its witnesses, with courage and creativity in the power of the Holy Spirit. See also the Popes' video [here](#)

Diocesan Yearbook

For those of you that ordered a copy of the yearbook they have now arrived and can be collected from the Parish Office. We do have a few spare copies. £4 each.

Celebrate - Parenting for Faith

Do you want to help the children you love find God in everyday life? Celebrate is running the Parenting for Faith course on Zoom. Whether you are a parent, guardian, grandparent, family member, friend or catechist you can help the young people in your life develop a vibrant and connected relationship with God – whatever their age! Join us on the following dates: 11, 18, 25 January & 1 February 2022. During the sessions there will be opportunity to discuss the content in small groups online. These will be organised in regions so that you can get to know other families in your area. To book your free place on the course register [here](#). We look forward to seeing you all there!

Pope Francis tweets...

Christmas symbols, especially the creche and trimmed tree, bring us back to the certainty that fills the heart with peace, with joy for the Incarnation, to God who becomes familiar: He dwells with us, He fills our days with the rhythm of hope.

Love Christmas

We would like to say a big thank you to those who donated money and nominated people for the Love Christmas bags of love. We will be packing and delivering nearly 50 bags this weekend.

Catholic Exeter Forming in Faith

The next sessions are on Monday 17 January 2022, 10.30am–12.30pm at Sacred Heart Tuesday 18 January 2022, 7.00–9.00pm at Blessed Sacrament. The sessions will be the same, it's the day, time and venue that are different. We're watching and discussing films from Bishop Robert Barron's 'CATHOLICISM' series. Our next session is Lesson 6: A body both suffering and glorious – the Mystical Union of Christ and the Church. To join us on this journey of discovery or simply to find out more, register by clicking the link here or come along.

Please note the change of dates.

Exeter Foodbank

Take a look [here](#) at our winter newsletter and to find out about this December at Exeter Foodbank. 2021 has been a time of uncertainty and crises for many – and a time of unexpected generosity too. In our newsletter, we reflect on a year that has brought both unprecedented challenges and unprecedented kindness too.

As the impact of reductions to Universal Credit, rising energy and utility costs set in, we know a tough winter lies ahead – but thanks to the generosity of the Exeter community, we will do our best to support people through. You can find out more about these challenges, and how we're seeking to support people in the newsletter so take a look.

The December priority items are: **deodorant (for both men & women), sponge puddings, custard, rice pudding, fruit juice, soap and washing powder (capsules)**. Please ONLY donate items from the list. Thank you for your understanding. Collection Points - Co-Op (Heavitree/St Thomas); Sainsbury's Alphington/Pinhoe/Guildhall); Tesco (Exe Vale); Waitrose (Gladstone Rd). Or you can donate money online [here](#)

Baptism Preparation Course

We are taking bookings for the January course now.

Are you expecting a baby and/or looking to have your child baptised?

We look forward to spiritually supporting you in preparation for this important sacrament and welcoming you and your family into our parish family. Courses are over two consecutive Saturday mornings from 10:15-12.00. If the Covid conditions still call for it the sessions will delivered via zoom. The course dates for 2022 are: **15/22 January, 14/21 May, 16/23 July and 15/22 October**. Godparents are especially welcome to attend the second Saturday session as the role of Godparents is explored. Click [here](#) to go to the parish website and click on Baptism enquiry form to register. If you have any problems accessing this you can contact Lesley in the parish office on 01392 274724 or at exeter-heavitree@prcdtr.org.uk

GIFT Growing In Faith Together

December Update

On 15 December, we met with GIFT parents online. Fr Jonathan led us through an exploration of Advent based on art work. Parents were given an opportunity to consider how the Annunciation offers us an opportunity to consider the themes of humility, anxiety and surprise.

What is GIFT?

GIFT is for all families of faith: for families who have already made their Holy Communion or for families with children who are looking forward to receiving this sacrament; for families with older children who want to be confirmed in their faith; for families with younger children who want to experience and grow in faith in a simple and enjoyable way

Next Meetings

Saturday 8 January: Family Epiphany session. Wednesday 19 January: Parent zoom call

Bedtime Chats

All of the Bedtime Chats can be found on the Blessed Sacrament Website GIFT page: <https://www.blessedsacrament.org.uk/parish-life/gift/>

Get in Touch If you would like to find out more about GIFT, please get in touch with Maria exeter-pastoral-assistant@prcdtr.org.uk.

If you would like to register for GIFT, please click on the link: [Here](#)

Epiphany Blessing

Blessing Your House - The ancient solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord ranks among the principal festivals of the whole Liturgical year, since it celebrates in the child born of Mary the manifestation of the one who is the Son of God, the Messiah of the Jewish people, and a light to the nations. Please take some blessed chalk from the back of the Church and mark the doorposts of your houses for this year: 20 + C + M + B + 22 CHRISTUS MANSIONEM BENEDICAT – MAY CHRIST BLESS THIS HOUSE. The initials CMB also stand for the legendary names of the Magi – CASPAR, MELCHIOR and BALTHASAR.

Crib Offerings

Putting All Children First – Especially At Christmas Time

Please take time to visit our nativity over the Christmas period. The collection will be donated to the **Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth)** as it works across the Diocese spreading God's love and giving families hope in times of crisis.

Thank you for your generosity.

Mass Times

Sunday 19 December

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Pray for expectant mothers

8.45am *People of the Parish*

10.45am

6.00pm *Mary & Thomas O'Halloran RIP*

Tuesday 21 December 6.30pm

St Peter Canisius Priest & Doctor

Wednesday 22 December 9.30am

Thursday 23 December 9.30am

St John of Kanty Priest

Friday 24 December

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

6.00pm & Midnight

Saturday 25 December

The Nativity of the Lord

8.45am & 10.45am

No 6.00pm Mass

Sunday 26 December

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

8.45am *Jack & Peggy Webber RIP*

10.45am *People of the Parish*

No 6.00pm Mass

Monday 27 December 9.30am

St John Apostle & Evangelist

Tuesday 28 December 9.30am

The Holy Innocents

Wednesday 29 December

No Mass St Thomas Beckett Bishop & Martyr

Thursday 30 December 9.30am

Friday 31 December 6.30pm

Holy Hour 7.00 – 8.00pm

Saturday 1 January 9.30am

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Sunday 2 January

Second Sunday after the Nativity

8.45am

10.45am

6.00pm *People of the Parish*

Tuesday 4 January 6.30pm

Wednesday 5 January 9.30am

Thursday 6 January

The Epiphany of the Lord

9.30am Olive Morgan RIP

7.00pm

Friday 7 January 6.30pm

Pat & George Stewart RIP

Saturday 8 January 9.30am



The Word

Sunday 19 December

First Reading Micah 5:1-4

Out of you will be born the one who is to rule over Israel.

Psalm Response

God of hosts, bring us back;
Let your face shine on us and we shall be saved

Second Reading Hebrews 10:5-10

Here I am! I am coming to obey your will.

Gospel Luke 1:39-44

Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?

Sunday 26 December

First Reading

Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6.12-14

He who fears the Lord respects his parents.

Psalm Response

O blessed are those who fear the
Lord and walk in his ways!

Second Reading Colossians 3:12-21

Family life in the Lord.

Gospel Luke 2:41-52

Jesus is found by his parents sitting among the doctors.

Sunday 2 January

First Reading

Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2.8-12

The wisdom of God has pitched her tent among the chosen people.

Psalm Response

The Word was made flesh,
and lived among us.

Second Reading Ephesians 1:3-6.15-18

He determined that we should become his adopted sons through Jesus.

Gospel John 1:1-18

The word was made flesh, and lived among us.

Sunday 9 January

First Reading Isaiah 42:1-4.6-7

Here is my servant in whom my soul delights.

Psalm Response

The Lord will bless his people
with peace.

Second Reading Acts 10:34-38

Here I am! I am coming to obey your will.

Gospel Luke 3:15-16.21-22

While Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened.



Blessed Sacrament Parish
is part of the Roman
Catholic Diocese of
Plymouth

Parish Information

Parish Priest

Fr Jonathan Stewart

Priest in retirement

Fr John Watkins

Parish Office

*The Presbytery, 29 Fore Street,
Heavitree, Exeter EX1 2QJ
01392 274724*

exeter-heavitree@prcdtr.org.uk

*Open Tuesday, Wednesday and
Thursday 10.00am–4.00pm*

Parish Secretary

Lesley Hooper

Parish Pastoral Assistant

Maria Quinn

exeter-pastoral-assistant@prcdtr.org.uk

Safeguarding Reps

Lesley Hooper & Maria Edwards

Please contact the Parish office if you have any concerns about the welfare of a child or a vulnerable adult.

St Nicholas School

Ringswell Avenue, Exeter EX1 3EG

01392 445403 admin@stncs.uk

www.st-nicholas-exeter.devon.sch.uk

Executive Head Teacher

Angela Folland

Blessed Sacrament Live

10.45am Mass on Sunday and most weekday Masses will be streamed live on the Parish YouTube channel.

Deadline for newsletter items 10.00am Thursday.

Your Offering

We are grateful for your continued generosity to the parish. **Please remember that the most efficient way for you to give is by standing order.** Forms are available by emailing the parish office. Arrangements are made directly with your bank. And if you can, please GiftAid your contribution.

Parish News by post & email

To receive the Parish News, by email or post, please phone or email the Parish Office and we will arrange to get a copy sent to you or someone you know who might like to receive it (with their permission).

Dial-a-Mass

For those without the internet or a computer the Mass is recorded and put on the telephone at 12 midday on Sundays and will stay until 11.59am the following Sunday. For the cost of a local call they can listen to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by dialing 01642 130120

Getting married?

Congratulations! Please give us six months' notice if you are hoping to marry in the Church.

The Bishops' Conference

Regular updates can be found at [here](#)

Churches Together

Devon News [here](#)

Exeter news [here](#)

England News [here](#).