

East Hendred Catholic Parish

After Epiphany

9th-16th January 2022



The Baptism of Christ

Andrea del Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci (1472-1475)

After Epiphany

9th-16th January 2022

WEEK 1 [YEAR 2]

All masses live-streamed www.churchservices.tv/easthendred

St Mary's is usually open each day from 9am until late afternoon.

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sunday | BAPTISM OF THE LORD | | |
| 9th January | 9.30am | Holy Mass | <i>(Fr Martin Flatman) Pro populo</i> |
| | 11.15am | Mass at St Patrick's | <i>(Fr Paul King)</i> |
| | 6pm | Holy Mass | <i>(Canon Turbitt)</i> |
| Monday | <i>(Ordinary Time: Year 2: Week 1)</i> | | |
| 10th January | <i>No Mass</i> | | |
| Tuesday | | | |
| 12th January | 9.15am | Holy Mass | <i>FM Bertha Ida Northcote 1951</i> |
| Wednesday | <i>St Aelred of Rievaulx, Abbot</i> | | |
| 13th January | 9.15am | Holy Mass | <i>FM Charles Eyston 1917</i> |
| Thursday | <i>St Hilary, Bishop & Doctor of the Church</i> | | |
| 14th January | 9.15am | Holy Mass | |
| Friday | | | |
| 15th January | 9.15am | Holy Mass | |
| Saturday | | | |
| 16th January | <i>No Mass</i> | | |
| Sunday | SECOND SUNDAY <i>Per Annum</i> (Year C) | | |
| 17th January | 9.30am | Parish Mass | <i>Pro populo</i> |
| | 11.15am | Mass at St Patrick's | |
| | 6pm | Holy Mass | |

CONTACT DETAILS

Fr Andrew: 01235 835038 or 07976 437979

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Reflection Born of the Virgin Mary (6)

An Extract from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Mary's virginal motherhood in God's plan

501 Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: 'The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love.'

502 The eyes of faith can discover in the context of the whole of Revelation the mysterious reasons why God in his saving plan wanted his Son to be born of a virgin. These reasons touch both on the person of Christ and his redemptive mission, and on the welcome Mary gave that mission on behalf of all men.

503 Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation. Jesus has only God as Father. 'He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed. . . He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures.'

504 Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb because he is the New Adam, who inaugurates the new creation: 'The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.' From his conception, Christ's humanity is filled with the Holy Spirit, for God 'gives him the Spirit without measure.' From 'his fullness' as the head of redeemed humanity 'we have all received, grace upon grace.'

505 By his virginal conception, Jesus, the New Adam, ushers in the new birth of children adopted in the Holy Spirit through faith. 'How can this be?' Participation in the divine life arises 'not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God'. The acceptance of this life is virginal because it is entirely the Spirit's gift to man. The spousal character of the human vocation in relation to God is fulfilled perfectly in Mary's virginal motherhood.

506 Mary is a virgin because her virginity is the sign of her faith 'unadulterated by any doubt', and of her undivided gift of herself to God's will. It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Saviour: 'Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ.'

507 At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church: 'the Church indeed. . . by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse.'

Next week: A summary of these reflections

Message from the Bishops

The Conference of Catholic Bishops of England and Wales has made a statement stressing the current regulations as laid down by the government. The Bishops ask that masks be worn even for singing, except by soloists &c. The statement also includes the following:*

Clarification on the Sunday Obligation

The Bishops' Statement *Honouring Sunday* reflected the pastoral situation of public worship in the light of the pandemic situation at this time. The Bishops have asked for all Catholics to reflect on their personal circumstances with respect to their attendance at public worship. Questions have been raised regarding the status of the Sunday Obligation. The *Code of Canon Law* states that 'Sunday... is the primordial holy day of obligation' (Can. 1246§1) and 'the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass.' (Can. 1247)

At the beginning of the pandemic, from Friday 20th March 2020, the Bishops of England and Wales recognised that the participation of the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration was prevented due to grave cause because of the inception of the covid-19 pandemic and stated that the Sunday obligation could not be fulfilled due to the inherent danger of the faithful gathering in churches for the Eucharistic celebration. On Monday 23rd March 2020, HM Government mandated the closure of places of worship along with other locations.

The Bishops, now having reflected on the current situation in England and Wales, recognise that the causes and effects of the pandemic are still present to such a degree that the absolute duty for all to freely attend the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration cannot yet be fulfilled.

As such, they have asked that all Catholics now reflect on the centrality of the Eucharist to their own life of faith and take into consideration their personal circumstances and the reasons as to whether they can now attend the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration or otherwise. Should a person feel that grave cause honestly persists in their personal circumstances, there is no sin associated with their non-attendance at Mass, and they are encouraged to devote themselves to prayer at home. This may be achieved either through personal prayer or by participating with a live-streamed celebration of Mass from a Church.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS



HOLY FATHER'S JANUARY PRAYER INTENTION

We pray for all those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution; may their own rights and dignity be recognized, which originate from being brothers and sisters in the human family.

THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED

Baby Martha, Sid Wallace, Dame Catherine, Diana France, John Castle, Petal Connell, Daniel Cuevas, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Karen Greig, Mary McNichol, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Week 9th-15th January: Harriet Champ, Robert Purcell, Helen Horgan, Alice Harper, Margaret Mary Duhig, Charlotte Hunt, Joseph Anns, Joseph Michael Anns, George Victor Daughlish

East Hendred Catholic Parish

NOTICEBOARD

CHURCH SERVICES

On Sunday 2nd January 2022, 183 people viewed, 54 machines looking only at St Mary's. 33 of these were in the UK and 21 elsewhere. 98 stayed on-line long enough to take part in Mass.

SYCAMORE

The **SYCAMORE** course for adults interested in finding out more about the Faith or preparing for baptism and/or confirmation is now well underway. Please contact aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk if you are interested, a.s.a.p. **SYCAMORE** meets on Tuesday at 8pm on Zoom. The next meeting is on Zoom this Tuesday, 11th January, and begins the second semester of the course.

CHARITY: DIDCOT

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: veronicapaget@hotmail.com or leave suitable food outside her front door.

TO GIVE TO OUR PARISH BY REGULAR STANDING ORDER OR GIFT

BANK DETAILS: PRCDTR East Hendred, St Mary

Sort Code: 309304 Account Number: 00877183

To arrange Gift Aid, contact : hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

SYNOD 2021-2023

Last October, the Holy Father launched a three-year consultation process with the whole Church. There are three stages. Between now and the end of April 2022, parishes are to produce a report to send to the diocese. These will be conflated nationally and, from September 2022 to March 2023, there will be reflections throughout the world. Finally in October 2023, the Synod of Bishops will meet in Rome to produce a report for the Pope. Every parish is asking people and groups to reflect on 'What changes need to be made – in myself, in our parish, in the Diocese, to make the Church's mission today more vibrant and effective?' We shall co-ordinate our parish response via individuals and accredited groups through the Parish Pastoral Council and the St Patrick's Pastoral Committee. Meanwhile, comments and suggestions, personal and group submissions, to Fr Andrew or to John Carpenter.

E-MAILS, WEBSITE, AND FACEBOOK

Last minute changes are sometimes unavoidable and these are communicated by e-mail to the Bulletin list. Anyone may join the Bulletin list - contact hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

See our website www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk

See also our East Hendred Catholic Parish page on Facebook.

The Divine Office

The People of God share in different ways in the daily recitation of the Divine Office. The Office of Readings (sometimes called 'Vigils' or 'Matins') used to be a night time provision. Nowadays it takes place early in the morning but may be scheduled for any convenient time of day. To this, religious add the minor hours of Terce (approx. 9am), Sext (approx. 12 noon), None (approx. 3pm), and Compline (late evening). Those not in religious communities are able to replace Terce, Sext, and None with a short Midday Office. The major hours are Lauds (Morning Prayer) and Vespers (Evening Prayer), each climaxing with a Gospel Canticle, the Song of Zechariah (*'Benedictus'*) in the morning and the Song of Our Lady (*'Magnificat'*) in the evening. It is these major hours, which the Second Vatican Council called 'the hinges' (*'cardines'*) of the Divine Office and it is these major hours which the whole People of God are to share.

It is not an easy time to buy Office Books, which are all being revised. Stocks are low if not non-existent. Many people now make use of an app and read the Office on an iPad or iPhone. Google <https://universalis.com> for material and help with dealing it. There are some basic decisions: the version on the internet is free but uses its own translation to avoid problems of copyright; the version as an iPhone or android app costs about £10 (one-off single payment) and that allows one to use the proper texts. There are also options: to use Revised Standard Version (as we do in East Hendred); to listen to the Office read and sung &c.

Universalis as it describes itself

Martin Kochanski who runs the site writes:

'[Universalis] is the biggest present there can be, because it changes lives, and it lasts for ever. A Universalis registration code costs £19.99... It gives the recipient all the Mass readings for every day, forever, and all the Hours of the Liturgy of the Hours for every day, forever. There are also benefits such as the daily 'About Today' pages, with their stories of the saints and their illustrations. The registration code works on whatever devices your friend has – Android and iPhone/iPad/iPod Touch and Mac and Windows – and also for making personal e-books. It is very simple indeed to give a Universalis registration code as a present. [Our blog post gives all the details.](#)'

East Hendred Catholic Parish



Baptism of the Lord(C)

9th January 2022

Antiphons,

Prayers and Readings

Entrance Antiphon

Baptizato Domino

After the Lord was baptised, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. *Cf Mt 3:16-17*

Collect

Almighty ever-living God, who, when Christ had been baptised in the River Jordan and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him, solemnly declared him your beloved Son, grant that your children by adoption, reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, may always be well pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever

First Reading

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11(RSV)

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!' Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

Psalm 104:1-4, 24-25, 27-30 R/ 1

**R/ Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, how great you are.**

O Lord my God, how great you are,
clothed in majesty and honour,
wrapped in light as with a robe!
You stretch out the heavens like a tent. **R/**

On the waters you establish your dwelling.
You make the clouds your chariot;
you ride on the wings of the wind .
You make the winds your messengers,
flame and fire your servants. **R/**

How many are your works O Lord!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.
Vast and wide is the span of the sea,
with its creeping things past counting,
living things great and small. **R/**

All of these look to you
to give them their food in due season.
You give it, they gather it up;
you open wide your hand, they are well filled. **R/**

You hide your face, they are dismayed;
you take away their breath they die,
returning to the dust from which they came.
You send forth your spirit, and they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth. **R/**

Second Reading

Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7(RSV)

The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds...But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Alleluia, Alleluia

Someone is coming, said John, someone greater than I:
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Gospel

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22 (RSV)

As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, 'I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire'. ... Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'

Prayer over the Offerings

Accept, O Lord, the offerings we have brought to honour the revealing of your beloved Son, so that the oblation of your faithful may be transformed into the sacrifice of him who willed in his compassion to wash away the sins of the world. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Preface

(De Baptismate Domini)

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For in the waters of the Jordan you revealed with signs and wonders a new Baptism, so that through the voice that came down from heaven we might come to believe in your Word dwelling among us, and by the Spirit's descending in the likeness of a dove we might know that Christ your Servant has been anointed with the oil of gladness and sent to bring the good news to the poor.. And so, with the Powers of heaven, we worship you constantly on earth, and before your majesty without end we acclaim: Holy, holy, holy &c.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION *after St Alphonsus Liguori (18th cent.)*

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul. Even if I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there, and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus. There is room in my heart for you.

Communion Antiphon

Ecce de quo dicebat

Behold the One of whom John said: I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

Jn 1:32, 34

Prayer after Communion

Nourished with these sacred gifts, we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord, that, faithfully listening to your Only-Begotten Son, we may be your children in name and in truth. Through Christ our Lord.

Alma Redemptoris Mater

Mother of Christ, hear you your people's cry
Star of the deep and Portal of the sky!
Mother of Him who you from nothing made.
Sinking, we strive and call to you for aid.
Oh, by that joy which Gabriel brought to you,
You Virgin first and last, let us your mercy see.

Scripture Reading

Week 1 Year 2

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Monday | 1 Samuel 1:1-8 | Mark 1:14-20 |
| Tuesday | 1 Samuel 1:9-20 | Mark 1:21-28 |
| Wednesday | 1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20 | Mark 1:29-39 |
| Thursday | 1 Samuel 4:1-11 | Mark 1:40-45 |
| Friday | 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22 | Mark 2:1-12 |
| Saturday | 1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1 | Mark 2:13-17 |

Next Sunday

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C)

Isaiah 62:1-5

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

John 2:1-11

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FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

10th – 15th January 2022

First Week *Per Annum*

Weekday Lectionary Year 2

Monday in Week 1 [*Year 2*]

10th January

Reading

1 Samuel 1:1-8 (RSV)

The Childless Wife of Elka'nah

1 There was a certain man of Ramatha'im-zo'phim of the hill country of E'phraim, whose name was Elka'nah the son of Jero'ham, son of Eli'hu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an E'phraimite. **2** He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Penin'nah. And Penin'nah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phin'ehas, were priests of the LORD. **4** On the day when Elka'nah sacrificed, he would give portions to Penin'nah his wife and to all her sons and daughters; **5** and, although he loved Hannah, he would give Hannah only one portion, because the LORD had closed her womb. **6** And her rival used to provoke her sorely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. **7** So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. **8** And Elka'nah, her husband, said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?'

Reflection

THE FIRST week in Ordinary Time begins today and, in this, Year 2, we embark on the first book of Samuel. This can be seen as one of two books – presumably the two books of Samuel could not fit on one scroll and were therefore divided. It can also be seen as one of four books – because the two books of the Kings - 1 Kings and 2 Kings – continue where the books of Samuel leave off. But it can also be seen as a fresh stage in a historical saga which stretches from the Creation of the world in Genesis 1 to the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian Exile. A ‘fresh stage’ also in that the focus is moving from Moses – whose presence and reputation dominates the earlier books – to David, from Mount Sinai, the site of the Mosaic covenant, to Mount Zion, the city of David. It is interesting that, whereas Moses is mentioned 767 times in the Masoretic text of the Jewish Scriptures, David is mentioned 1075 times. In fact the second half of 1 Samuel and the whole of 2 Samuel are devoted to the story of David. As the People of God makes the transition from being ruled by judges – distinguished leaders, each chosen on their own merits – to being ruled by hereditary kings, we learn how that can be problematic. Nonetheless, despite the huge flaws in the character of the kings – Saul, David, and Solomon included – we see in the figures of Samuel the prophet and David the king types of Christ.

Tuesday in Week 1 [Year 2]

11th January

Reading

1 Samuel 1:9-20 (RSV)

Samuel's Birth

⁹After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. ¹⁰She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. ¹¹And she vowed a vow and said, 'O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant, and remember me, and not forget your maidservant, but will give to your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.'

¹²As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard; therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. ¹⁴And Eli said to her, 'How long will you be drunken? Put away your wine from you.' ¹⁵But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman sorely troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶Do not regard your maidservant as a base woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.' ¹⁷Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have made to him.' ¹⁸And she said, 'Let your maidservant find favour in your eyes.' Then the woman went her way and ate, and her countenance was no longer sad.

¹⁹They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elka'nah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her; ²⁰and in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, 'I have asked him of the LORD.'

Reflection

THE STORY of the birth of Samuel, son of Elka'nah and Hannah, reminds us, in some ways, of the story of the birth of St John the Baptist. He was born to an elderly, childless, mother. He too will grow up to be a Nazarite, one whose head is never shaved. There is also the similarity of the shrine at Shiloh, where Eli served, and the Temple at Jerusalem, where Zechariah served. And yet there are greater similarities with the story of Jesus. In both stories – the story of Samuel and the story of Jesus – the role of the mother is central. Hannah, Samuel's mother, is a type of the Virgin Mary. The clue to this is the similarity of the Song of Hannah, which is used today in place of the responsorial psalm, to the *Magnificat*, the song which Mary sang when she visited her cousin, Elizabeth, a cousin who, in her age and her recent childlessness, is a similar figure to Hannah. Both the Song of Hannah and the Song of Mary are outbursts of praise for the providential gift of a child. We gradually see that the Davidic covenant – which emerges from Samuel's work - is a foreshadowing of the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David.

Wednesday in Week 1 [Year 2]

12th January

Reading

1 Samuel 3:1-10, [11-18], 19-20 (RSV)

Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity

3 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place; **3** the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. **4** Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' **5** and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. **6** And the LORD called again, 'Samuel!' and Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' **7** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. **8** And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. **9** Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant hears."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came and stood forth, calling as at other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant hears.' [**11** Then the LORD said to Samuel, 'Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel, at which the two ears of every one that hears it will tingle. **12** On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. **13** And I tell him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. **14** Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering for ever.'

15 Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. **16** But Eli called Samuel and said, 'Samuel, my son.' And he said, 'Here I am.' **17** And Eli said, 'What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do

so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.' ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, 'It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him.']

¹⁹ And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD.

Reflection

THE CALL of Samuel is a famous story, partly because it is simple and evocative, relying on the directness of a child, and partly because the notion of hearing the call of God amidst the silent watches of the night is so resonant in the traditions of spirituality. The background to this story is one of spiritual dryness: 'the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision', says verse 1. Underlining that poverty of spirit is the blasphemy of Eli's sons, a section missing from the passage as read at Mass, and yet the message Samuel receives from God is about the sons' wickedness and what we hear from Eli is acceptance of whatever punishment the Lord will bring upon him and his family. This is an important dimension: Samuel is not just a child who is sensitive to spiritual matters. He is, from the start, a prophet whose difficult job it is to convey difficult messages, what we now call 'speaking truth to power'. This will be his role at several stages in his adult ministry as the Lord's prophet, after he replaces Eli and becomes the last of the judges of Israel..

Thursday in Week 1 [Year 2]

13th January

Reading

1 Samuel 4:1-11 (RSV)

The Ark of God Captured

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines; they encamped at Ebene'zer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. ² The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who slew about four thousand men on the field of battle. ³ And when the troops came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, 'Why has the LORD put us to rout today before the Philistines? Let us bring

the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that he may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.’⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phin’eahas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

⁵ When the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. ⁶ And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, ‘What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?’ And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, ⁷ the Philistines were afraid; for they said, ‘A god has come into the camp.’ And they said, ‘Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. ⁸ Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. ⁹ Take courage, and acquit yourselves like men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; acquit yourselves like men and fight.’

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home; and there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty-thousand-foot soldiers. ¹¹ And the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phin’eahas, were slain.

Reflection

THE CAPTURE of the Ark of the Covenant, the place of God’s indwelling presence, was a disaster of the highest order. The equivalent for Catholics would be if every tabernacle in the world were desecrated. Yet the Hebrews came to see that this terrible act was not a sign of God’s vulnerability but of his might. He punished Eli and his sons by allowing his own moveable shrine to be captured by the warring Philistines. And yet, as we one might expect, having God to stay was to prove far from pleasant. The arrival of the Ark in the camp filled the Philistines with dread, a dread they dealt with by fighting all the harder and defeating the Israelites. 30,000 Israelites died and the Ark was taken into captivity. A couple of chapters later – in a passage not read at Mass – we discover that the Philistines are visited by a plague of mice and a plague of tumours. They hastily return the Ark to Israel and Samuel assumes the mantle of Eli, as the last judge and the king-maker.

Friday in Week 1 [Year 2]

14th January

Reading

1 Samuel 8:4-7, [8-9], 10-22 (RSV)

Israel's Request for a King

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, ⁵ and said to him, 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations.' ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to govern us.' And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, 'Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. [⁸ According to all the deeds which they have done to me,^[a] from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. ⁹ Now then, hearken to their voice; only, you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.']

¹⁰ So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking a king from him. ¹¹ He said, 'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; ¹² and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your menservants and maidservants, and the best of your cattle and your asses, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day.'

¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, 'No! but we will have a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.' ²¹ And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people,

he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. ²² And the LORD said to Samuel, 'Listen to their voice, and make them a king.' Samuel then said to the men of Israel, 'Go every man to his city.'

Reflection

SAMUEL is the last of a long line of 'judges', that is, leaders chosen not by birth or through inheritance but because of what are perceived to be outstanding qualities and charisms. Having replaced Eli as judge, he is faced by the demand of the people for a king. Samuel remonstrates with them: a king would take the best of everything from them, their finest young people, their finest crops and produce, their finest livestock, and would enslave them. Throughout the subsequent history of Israel, there is plenty of opportunity to reflect on the problems brought by kings and by inherited power and yet the sovereignty of the divine will is seen throughout, not least at the outset, when the Lord says to Samuel, 'Listen to their voice, and make them a king'. Samuel's role – and here we see something of his foreshadowing of Christ – is to empty himself of power and take on the role of kingmaker and royal adviser.

Saturday in Week 1 [Year 2]

15th January

Reading

1 Samuel 9:1-4,[5-16]. 17-19; 10:1 (RSV)

Saul Chosen to Be King

9 There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abi'el, son of Zeror, son of Beco'rath, son of Aphi'ah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth; ² and he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

³ Now the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to Saul his son, 'Take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the asses.'⁴ And they^[a] passed through the hill country of E'phraim and passed through the land of Shal'ishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Sha'alim, but they were not there. Then they passed through the land of Benjamin, but did not find them.

[⁵ When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, 'Come, let us go back, lest my father cease to care about the asses and become anxious about us.' ⁶ But he said to him, 'Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man that is held in honour; all that he says comes true. Let us go there; perhaps he can tell us about the journey on which we have set out.' ⁷ Then Saul said to his servant, 'But if we go, what can we bring the man? For the bread in our sacks is gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What have we?' ⁸ The servant answered Saul again, 'Here, I have with me the fourth part of a shekel of silver, and I will give it to the man of God, to tell us our way.' ⁹ (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, 'Come, let us go to the seer'; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.) ¹⁰ And Saul said to his servant, 'Well said; come, let us go.' So they went to the city where the man of God was.

¹¹ As they went up the hill to the city, they met young maidens coming out to draw water, and said to them, 'Is the seer here?' ¹² They answered, 'He is; behold, he is just ahead of you. Make haste; he has come just now to the city, because the people have a sacrifice today on the high place. ¹³ As soon as you enter the city, you will find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat; for the people will not eat till he comes, since he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those eat who are invited. Now go up, for you will meet him immediately.' ¹⁴ So they went up to the city. As they were entering the city, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.

¹⁵ Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel: ¹⁶ 'Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of Philistines; for I have seen the affliction of my people, because their cry has come to me.] ¹⁷ When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, 'Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall rule over my people.' ¹⁸ Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate, and said, 'Tell me where is the house of the seer?' ¹⁹ Samuel answered Saul, 'I am the seer; go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind. ²⁰ As for your asses that were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?' ²¹ Saul answered, 'Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my family

the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?’

²² Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, who were about thirty persons. ²³ And Samuel said to the cook, ‘Bring the portion I gave you, of which I said to you, “Put it aside.”’ ²⁴ So the cook took up the leg and the upper portion and set them before Saul; and Samuel said, ‘See, what was kept is set before you. Eat; because it was kept for you until the hour appointed, that you might eat with the guests.’

So Saul ate with Samuel that day. ²⁵ And when they came down from the high place into the city, a bed was spread for Saul upon the roof, and he lay down to sleep. ²⁶ Then at the break of dawn Samuel called to Saul upon the roof, ‘Up, that I may send you on your way.’ So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street.

²⁷ As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, ‘Tell the servant to pass on before us, and when he has passed on stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.’

10 Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said, ‘Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies round about. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.

Reflection

THE RISE and fall of Saul, first King of Israel, is simply told. The people want a king because they wish to be like the gentiles – who variously group round a king, thus enabling them to be valiant in war. Saul is chosen and anointed and yet, coming from the tribe of Benjamin not Judah and making a number of notable mistakes from the start, proves to be less than a success. He is valiant and successful in battle, but oversteps the mark by offering sacrifice, as only a priest should (1 Sam 13), and disobeying Samuel’s prophetic command (1 Sam 15). As we shall hear on Monday, Saul’s reign as King is brought to an end prematurely.