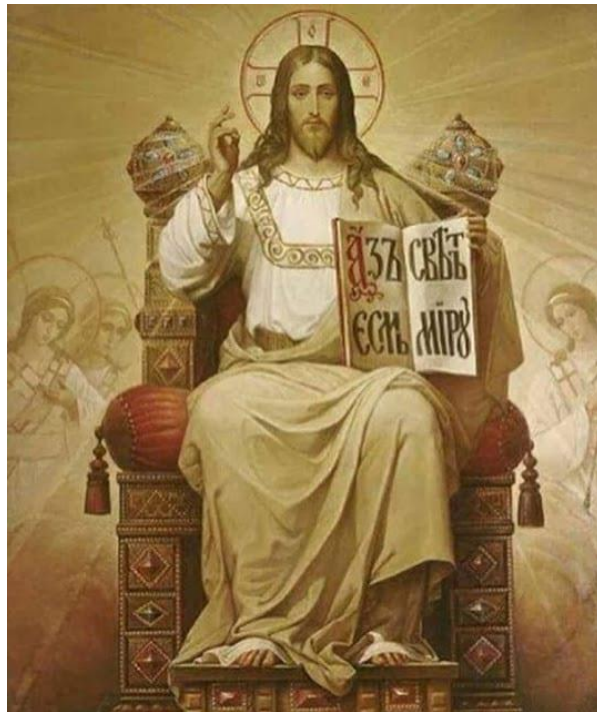


**East Hendred Catholic Parish**

# **Food for the Journey**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020**



**Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**

**(22<sup>nd</sup> November)**

# LOOKING AHEAD TO CHRISTMAS

**IT IS** too early yet to tell what the protocols round Christmas will be. I hope that we are back in 'Tier 1' and able to resume the arrangements in force before the latest Lockdown.

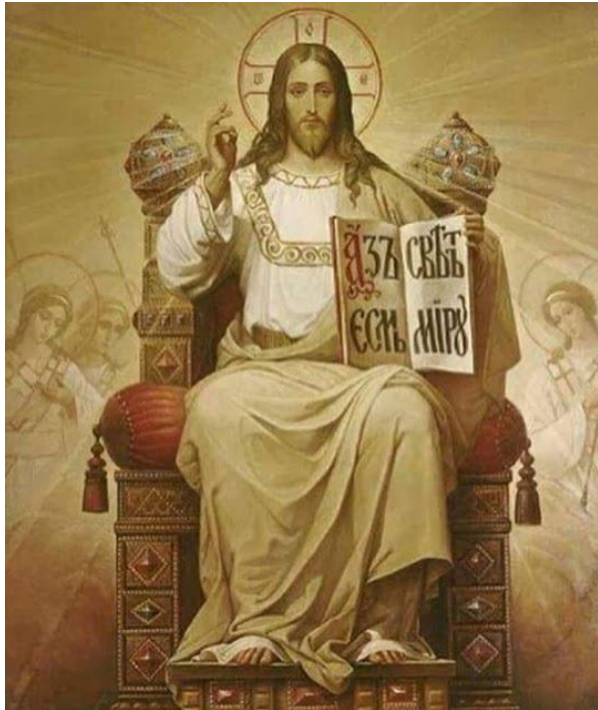
Assuming that, the plan is to have two Christmas masses on Christmas Eve (4pm and 8pm) as well as two on Christmas Day (9.30am and 11.15am). There will be no congregational singing at these Masses, and this year, unfortunately, we can't host a Crib Service, for reasons which are not hard to imagine.

We shall need to operate a booking system and the plan is to send out details how to book in the next bulletin (week beginning 29<sup>th</sup> November). We shall maximise our numbers, whilst retaining the 2 metre rule, and we are giving plenty of notice of how the booking will happen. For fairness' sake, it won't be 'first come first served' and nothing will be finalised **until after 13<sup>th</sup> December**. Please tell us nothing **until after 3<sup>rd</sup> December**, when we shall know about the release of Lockdown restraints.

There will be three methods of booking, to suit different needs. One will be a Google poll, which will allow you to express your preferences in a way very helpful to us. Less easy for us, but easier for others, will be processing the details you send us, in the form we ask for them, by e-mail. Last, but absolutely fine, is giving me a ring (01235 835038) sometime between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December. I can then feed your details into our system.

Fr Andrew

# East Hendred Catholic Parish



## Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (A)

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

## Antiphons, Prayers, and Readings

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### Entrance Antiphon

*Dignus est Agnus*

How worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength and honour. To him belong glory and power for ever and ever.

*Rev 5:12; 1:6*

### Collect

Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise. 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

*Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17 (RSV)*

Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.... <sup>15</sup> I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will

feed them in justice.<sup>17</sup> As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, rams and he-goats.

**Psalm 23:1-3, 5-6 R/1**

**R/        The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose. **R/**

Near restful waters he leads me,  
he revives my soul.  
He guides me along the right path,  
for the sake of his name. **R/**

You have prepared a table before me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. **R/**

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me  
all the days of my life.  
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for length of days unending. **R/**

**Second Reading**

*1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28 (RSV)*

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death... <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.

**Gospel Acclamation**

Alleluia, **alleluia.**

Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David! **Alleluia, alleluia.**

## **Gospel**

*Matthew 25:31-46 (RSV)*

Jesus said to his disciples: <sup>31</sup> 'When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup> and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' <sup>41</sup> Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' <sup>46</sup> And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

## **Reflection**

**I REMEMBER** a discussion with Catholics years ago, years before I became a Catholic, about whether they were sure that they would go to heaven. No they weren't, they said. For my part, I was sure that I should go to heaven and that they would too. The Catholics - an ordinary lay family, not especially observant - said that they would ask an elderly nun of their acquaintance, a very holy person. Back came the answer. 'No', said the nun, 'I can't be sure of salvation. I can't be sure about going to heaven'.

In those days, as a member of the Church of England, a Reformed Church, I had learned emotionally that I was saved. It's not language I use and it was ridiculously recently that I came to understand it as what Evangelicals mean by 'the doctrine assurance'. The historic agreement between Catholics and Lutherans, signed at Augsburg on 'Reformation Day', 31<sup>st</sup> October 1517, suggested that, whatever the differences of mental furniture, Catholics and Protestants don't ultimately disagree about who is saved and why they are saved. All agree that it is God's grace which

enables us to respond to him in faith. All agree that it is by God's grace that, as Ephesians 2:10 puts it,

**'we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works', 'good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them'.**

So what do I make of the belief of the elderly nun that, until she got to the finishing post, she could not be assured that she would be saved? I often wrestle with this and one answer I get is that, whereas those of the Age of Faith were often unsure whether they would go to heaven or go to hell, those of the modern period become uncertain instead whether life or annihilation faces us. We believe, we trust, we hope: but in this world there are no certainties, apart from death and taxes, as Benjamin Franklin said.

There is a neatness about the story of the Great Assize, presided over by Christ the King, the merciful judge of those who practise neither the Jewish nor the Christian religion. There is a neatness about the somewhat different criteria by which those in the relationship of the covenant are judged. My secular friend next door will surely be judged by his readiness to help his neighbour. I shall be judged by my faith and trust in God, a faith and trust which is his gift to me. And, since a living faith cannot but result in good works and a holy life, I suspect that, like my secular friend, whether my faith is a living faith will be judged finally by how I respond to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and the sick. If my faith doesn't quite result in me learning to overcome my weakness and deal fairly with those in need, I trust and pray that, however much of an old goat I may seem, I shall be, in the Lord's eyes, no worse than a silly sheep. Amen.

### **Prayer over the Offerings**

As we offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice by which the human race is reconciled to you, we humbly pray that your Son himself may bestow on all nations the gifts of unity and peace. Through Christ our Lord.

### **Preface**

*(De Christo universorum Rege)*

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 you anointed your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with the oil of gladness as eternal Priest and King of all creation, so that, by offering himself on the altar of the Cross as a spotless sacrifice to bring us peace, he might accomplish the mysteries of human redemption and, making all created things subject to his rule, he might present to the immensity of your majesty an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace. And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with

all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim: Holy, holy, holy &c.

**Communion Antiphon**

*Sedebit Dominus Rex*

The Lord sits as King for ever. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

*Ps 29:10-11*

**Prayer after Communion**

Having received the food of immortality, we ask, O Lord, that, glorying in obedience to the commands of Christ, the King of the universe, we may live with him eternally in his heavenly Kingdom. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

**Salve Regina**

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

**Scripture Reading (Week 34 Year 2)**

Monday	Revelation 14:1-5	Luke 21:1-4
Tuesday	Revelation 14:14-19	Luke 21:5-11
Wednesday	Revelation 15:1-4	Luke 21:12-19
Thursday	Rev 18:1-2, 21-23, 1 9:1-3, 9	Luke 21:20-28
Friday	Revelation 20:1-4, 11-21:2	Luke 21:29-33
Saturday	Revelation 22:1-7	Luke 21:34-36

**ADVENT SUNDAY (YEAR B)**

**Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1, 3-8**

**1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

**Mark 13:33-37**

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**From Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November when, with the season of Advent we begin the new Church Year, we shall be in Year B (The Year of Mark) for the Sunday Lectionary and in Year 1 for the Weekday Lectionary. The first week of Advent is also the first week of the Four-Week Psalter.**

# NOTICEBOARD

## **HOLY FATHER'S NOVEMBER PRAYER INTENTION**

We pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind.

## **THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED**

Baby Martha, John Castle, Petal Connell, Daniel Cuevas, Rose Millet, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Sr Catherine, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Angus Clark, Karen Greig, Kitty Teasdale, Mary Mc Nichol, Andrew Gunn, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol, Christine Robinson

## **THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED**

Week 22nd-28th Nov: Cornelia Purcell, Patrick Kelly, Lilian Purcell.

## **ECUMENICAL EVENING PRAYER**

At 6pm each evening during the rest of November we have been asked by Catholic and Anglican Bishops to pray for our country, for those who are ill with COVID-19 and all in the NHS who seek to care for them. The format is short and simple - five minutes max - and those who wish may stay on live-stream for Evening Prayer - ten more minutes. The live-streaming is on East Hendred Catholic Parish Facebook Page and the Benefice of Wantage Downs Facebook Page on alternate days. Please join us! This week it is (Sun) RC (Mon) C of E (Tues) RC (Weds) C of E (Thurs) RC (F) C of E (Sat) RC

## **OPEN CHURCH THIS WEEK**

St Mary's will be open for Private Prayer daily from 10am to 4pm (Thursdays 10.30am to 4pm). Please sign in with QR or, if you are unable to do that, please e-mail [hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk) to say that you have visited. Please observe carefully the regulations set out on the noticeboard on the easel as you enter Church. This is a new venture. Please do what you can to ensure that it goes safely and well.

## **MASSES THIS WEEK**

At the time of writing there are to be no public masses between 5<sup>th</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Mass will be live-streamed Sunday to Friday. We have moved from our own live-streaming to live-streaming from St Mary's, courtesy of Church Services TV. See the times of Mass and use the link on [www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk](http://www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk).



## **DIOCESAN DAY OF PRAYER**

On Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November, there will be a day of Prayer for the end of the COVID-19 plague. We begin with Mass at 9.15am (on-line) and end with Ecumenical Prayer on-line at 6pm on the Benefice of Wantage Downs Facebook Page. In St Mary's (and on-line) there will be a time of prayer, 12-3pm, with the Blessed Sacrament Exposed. There will be a list on the board for those who wish to keep watch to sign up. Bring your own pen!

## **THE YEAR OF THE WORD**

Following the disruption caused by COVID-19, Bishop Philip has extended 'The Year of the Word' until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. In short, we shall continue with our intense Scripture programme till then. So far, we have had weekly 'The God who speaks' Bible Study (and I should like that to continue and become more extensive) and my own 'Food for the Journey' daily reflections, which began last March. Many people have been helped by the reflections, whether by regular or occasional study, or just the reassurance of being included in a mail-list. We are doing our very best in this parish to bring the Bible to the forefront of our lives.

## **CHILDREN CELEBRATE**

Our Team have produced resources, which are available as booklets and kits at the back of St Mary's, to collect when the Church is open. See also the website [www.hundredcatholicparish.org.uk](http://www.hundredcatholicparish.org.uk)

### **Resources for 22<sup>nd</sup> November**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ, King (Year A) [\(docx, 80kb\)](#)
- Our Lord Jesus Christ, King (Year A) illustration [\(pdf, 750kb\)](#)

[www.cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy](http://www.cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy)

Children's liturgy general guidelines [\(doc, 59kb\)](#)

## **GIVING**

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: [veronicapaget@hotmail.com](mailto:veronicapaget@hotmail.com) or leave suitable food outside her front door. [Jackymattam@btinternet.com](mailto:Jackymattam@btinternet.com) needs help with the poor locally.

She needs warm clothes for the following: Boys age 3-7 years, boy age 6-9 months, girl 9-18 months, girl age 2 years, girl age 6 years, girls age 2-5 years, but no storage space for other ages at present.

## **TO GIVE**

TO OUR PARISH BY REGULAR STANDING ORDER OR OCCASIONAL GIFT

**BANK DETAILS: PRCDTR East Hendred, St Mary**

**Sort Code: 309304 Account Number: 00877183**

**To arrange Gift Aid, contact :** [hundred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:hundred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

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## **CONTACT DETAILS**

**Fr Andrew** is 01235 835038 or 07976 437979

[aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)



## CAFOD World Gifts

This Christmas why not buy gifts that will change lives and bring happiness! CAFOD's World Gifts are a range of virtual gifts that transform the lives of those living in poverty overseas. New gifts this year included Keep Clean £6 (soap and washing powder for family ) and Emergency Food £50 so please look on line at: <https://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk/>

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mary's  
meals

a simple solution to world hunger

Donate

Give until 31 January 2021 and your **donation will be doubled** by the UK government, up to £2 million – meaning we can reach even more hungry children in Liberia with life-changing school meals.



**We are so grateful to everyone who thinks of Mary's Meals at Christmas, but even more so this year. With one of our Christmas [gift cards](#), you can give the gift of hope and help children in some of the world's poorest countries to thrive.**

**And this year, our gift cards have twice the impact. Give until 31 January 2021 and your donation will be doubled by the UK government, up to £2 million – meaning we can reach even more hungry children in Liberia with life-changing school meals.**

You can order [online](#) or by calling 0800 698 1212.

## **National Youth Sunday 2020 Sunday 22nd November**

National Youth Sunday (NYS) this Sunday represents an opportunity to recognise explicitly young people - their gifts, talents, and uniqueness. It also provides the Church with an opportunity to thank them and affirm their contribution to the life of the local and universal Church. As I am sure you appreciate, this year it will not be possible for us to celebrate NYS through our annual large gatherings at the Cathedral here in Portsmouth. However, a host of resources to facilitate the celebration of National Youth Sunday and the Feast of Christ the King can be accessed at [www.nationalyouthsunday.com](http://www.nationalyouthsunday.com) Please encourage the celebration of this special day by referring to the resources in your notices/homilies and including the link to them in your parish newsletters. The resources are split into four categories; For You; For Parish; For School; and For Family they include Prayers of intercession, a Children's liturgy pack, and an excellent Family five minutes video that encourages participation and reflection on the theme of together – it is very definitely worth watching. Here is a possible Newsletter insert:

### **National Youth Sunday - Novena to Christ the King**

Youth ministry teams and organisations throughout the country will lead a nine-day Novena to Christ the King starting on Friday 13th November. The Novena will be live on Instagram. The text will also be available on social media to pray the Novena at a time that suits. Keep up to date with developments and resources by following @NationalYouthSunday on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

# FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Week 34[ii]

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Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November

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## Collect for Week 34

**STIR UP** the will of your faithful, we pray, O Lord, that striving more eagerly to bring your divine work to fruitful completion, they may receive in greater measure the healing remedies your kindness bestows. 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.

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## Reading

*Rev 14:1-5*

*The Lamb and the 144,000*

**14** Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, <sup>3</sup> and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. <sup>4</sup> It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, <sup>5</sup> and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.

## Reflection

**TO MAKE** sense of today's reading from Revelation 14, we need to look first at chapter 13. We learnt last week that the Apocalypse may date from the 90s. The Emperor Domitian died in AD96 and he notoriously persecuted

Christians. As we said last week, it has been suggested that the Number of the Beast, 666, which figures in chapter 13 verse 18, expressed in Roman Numerals as DCLXVI, stood for Domitian, an absolute dictator and a notorious persecutor of Christians. Expressed in Roman numerals, 666 is DCLXVI— *Domitius Caesar Legatos Xti Violenter Interfecit*—which translates as ‘The Emperor Domitian violently killed the ambassadors of Christ.’ But it’s possible, that the Roman Emperor referred to is not Domitian but Nero, who ruled from AD54 to AD68. This would fit with the number of the beast written in Hebrew, with numbers expressed as letters, and consonants adding up to 666. With these different theories we cannot get very much further than saying that the First Beast of chapter 13, with ten horns and seven heads, refers to empires and kings and the seven hills of Rome. The Second Beast in chapter 13 is a parody of Emperor-worship, promoted by a pagan priesthood. The two Beasts represent considerable adversity and discouragement for the Christian community of Asia Minor and it is for that reason that the woes of chapter 13 are followed by the consolation of chapter 14.

In today’s reading, we pick up once more the themes of the heavenly worship, which were there in the reading from chapter 4 a week ago. ‘God’ and ‘the Lamb’ are distinguished – Father and Son – and the four living creatures and twenty-four elders are once more in attendance on the throne of God. There are twelve times twelve faithful Christians – 144,000 – all marked with the name of the Father and of the Lamb. This is to reassure the persecuted Christian community that they will endure through and survive the tribulations of the present. There is a mention of harp music – a sign of the ethereal – and although the reference to chastity is defined in terms of sexual purity, its literal meaning, it has been suggested that the chastity referred to is refraining from going along with idolatry. Infidelity to God in the Bible is not infrequently associated with images of adultery and immoral living.

## Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November

*St Andrew Dung-Lac, Priest, & Companions, Martyrs*

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**ST ANDREW** Dung-Lac (1795-1839) was a Vietnamese martyr, beheaded at Hanoi. He was one in a long line of martyrs, 117 in all, who were murdered between 1625 and 1886. 21 of them were foreign missionaries. They were canonised in 1988.

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### Collect

**O GOD**, source and origin of all fatherhood, who kept the Martyrs Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and his companions faithful to the Cross of your Son, even to the shedding of their blood: grant, through their intercession, that, spreading your love among our brothers and sisters, we may be your children both in name and in truth. 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.

---

### Reading

*Rev 14:14-19*

*Reaping the Earth's Harvest*

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. <sup>15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, 'Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.' <sup>16</sup> So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

<sup>17</sup> And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup> Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, 'Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.' <sup>19</sup> So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

## Reflection

**OMITTED** from our semi-continuous reading of the Book of Revelation are the solemn admonitions of three angels, stressing the need to glorify God in view of the Day of Judgment. There is woe in store for Babylon – that is for Rome – and a warning that apostates and idolaters will endure hell. This leads us to today’s reading, when the sickle of wrath is wielded and the harvest of the earth is thrown into the great wine press of God’s wrath. The imagery is from Joel 3:12-13, where the harvest and vintage put an end to the pagan nations. It is not uncommon as a metaphor for judgment – Is 17:5; Jer 51:33; Mt 13:30, 39; Mt 27:12 – hence the sickle rather than the sword. The phrase ‘one like a son of man’ describes the one who does the reaping and, though it is not here a proper name for Christ, he is the one to whom we are referring. The imagery is from the Book of Daniel (Dan 7:13) and we met him thus described in Rev 1:13. Particularly at this time of year, we are reminded of Charles Wesley’s hymn ‘Lo! He comes with clouds descending’ and, of course, of the ending of Christ coming in judgment, professed in the Creed, and spelt out in the farewell discourse of St Mark’s Gospel (chapter 13). Both in St Mark and in Revelation the Second Coming of Christ and the judgment of the nations seemed imminent. We now know that this end-event is probably not imminent but that we need to live as though it were.

## Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November

*(St Catherine of Alexandria, Virgin and Martyr)*



[AB1]

**ST CATHERINE** of Alexandria was a fourth century well-to-do woman in Alexandria, Egypt, who, after refusing to worship pagan gods, was martyred. She defended the faith in debate with philosophers. Sometimes known as St Catherine of the Wheel – the instrument of torture and execution – she died under the Emperor Maxentius. Legend says that her body was taken to Mount Sinai by angels and a monastery (which is still there) was built in her honour

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## Collect

**ALMIGHTY** ever-living God, who gave Saint Catherine of Alexandria to your people as a Virgin and an invincible Martyr: grant that, through her intercession, we may be strengthened in faith and constancy and spend ourselves without reserve for the unity of the Church. 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.

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## Reading

*Rev 15:1-4*

*The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb*

**15** Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

<sup>2</sup> And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. <sup>3</sup> And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

'Great and wonderful are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

O King of the ages!

<sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear and glorify your name, O Lord?

For you alone are holy.

All nations shall come and worship you,

for your judgments have been revealed.'

## Reflection

**WITH** the sea of glass the prophet is once more in heaven, with the heavenly cast whom we have already met. The harps are a symbol of worship and the congregation for the heavenly worship are those who have conquered in the fight, all 144,000 of them. The beast and its image and the number of its name are all vanquished. The song which they sing is called the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb but, unlike the Song of Moses in Exodus 15, this song does not rejoice in the downfall of its foes but in the glory of God. Nevertheless, linking Moses and the Lamb, the song links the two deliverances, the deliverance from the Egyptians and the



deliverance from the pagan nations. The phrases of the Song are drawn from Old Testament verses: Psalms 111:2; 139:14; Amos 4:13; Ps 145:17; Deut 32:4; Jer 10:7; Ps 86:9; Mal 1:11; Ps 98:2. We set against the terrifying imagery of the Apocalypse its huge optimism that the battle has been fought and won and that we are now in 'finishing time'.

## Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November (*Week 33[ii]*)

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### Collect for Week 33

**GRANT** us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. 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.

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### Reading

*Rev 18:1-2, 21-23, 19:1-3, 9*

*The Fall of Babylon and the Rejoicing in Heaven*

**18** After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendour. <sup>2</sup> And he called out with a mighty voice,

'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!  
It has become a dwelling place of demons,  
a haunt of every foul spirit,  
a haunt of every foul and hateful bird;....

<sup>21</sup> Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

'So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,  
and shall be found no more;  
<sup>22</sup> and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters,  
shall be heard in you no more;  
and a craftsman of any craft  
shall be found in you no more;  
and the sound of the millstone

shall be heard in you no more;  
<sup>23</sup> and the light of a lamp  
shall shine in you no more;  
and the voice of bridegroom and bride  
shall be heard in you no more;  
for your merchants were the great men of the earth,  
and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.

**19** After this I heard what seemed to be the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying,

'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,  
<sup>2</sup> for his judgments are true and just;  
he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with  
her fornication,  
and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.'

<sup>3</sup> Once more they cried,  
'Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.'... <sup>9</sup> And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are true words of God.'

## Reflection

**YESTERDAY** we had the Song of Moses and the Lamb because we were celebrating the winning of the battle, the final victory of God over the forces of evil. This theme continues today – two or three chapters later - with a rather gleeful account of the disaster which has befallen pagan Rome. We have missed out the seven bowls of God's wrath, which are like the plagues which befell Egypt at the time of the Exodus. The final plague leads to the destruction of Rome, whose fate we should have lingered over in chapter 17. It is small wonder that various Protestant Christians, hostile to Catholicism, have seen the denunciations of pagan Rome in the Book of Revelation as prophetic of the fate of Roman Catholicism. But, it has to be said, the enemy in Revelation is paganism and an empire which persecutes and martyrs Christians. In today's reading, we have another heavenly canticle, preceded by declarations by two mighty angels, different from John's angel-guide. When we hear of salvation, what we are really hearing about is victory.

## Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November (Week 34[ii])

### Reading

Rev 20:1-4, 11-21:2

*The Thousand Years, the Dead are Judged, and the New Jerusalem is revealed*

**20** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup> and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while.

<sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.....

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; <sup>15</sup> and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

**21** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;

### Reflection

**WE STAY** with the victory which we have been exploring for the last couple of days and, with the victory, comes the end of Satan, his utter vanquishing. The faithful departed come back to life and we are at the throne of judgment. The deeds of the faithful are revealed, as they are

written in the Book of Life, and Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire, as are any whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life. Then is revealed the new heaven and the new earth, and the new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride for her husband. The Marriage Feast of the Lamb is about to commence.

## **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November** (*Week 34[ii]*)

### **Reading**

*Revelation 22:1-7*

#### *The River of Life*

**22** Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life<sup>[a]</sup> with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; <sup>4</sup> they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

<sup>6</sup> And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. <sup>7</sup> And behold, I am coming soon.' Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

### **Reflection**

**ON THIS**, the last day of the Church's Year, we finish in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible. We are not quite at the end: there is an epilogue and benediction which fittingly balances the opening of the book, its salutation and opening vision. But we are at what feels like the end of the book. We encounter the River of the Water of Life and the beatific vision amidst eternal Light.

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