

**DEANERY OF ST EDMUND CAMPION**  
**ENGLISH MARTYRS—**  
**VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE PASTORAL AREA**

[www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

[www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk](http://www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk)

# **East Hendred Catholic Parish**



**SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT**

**5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

# SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021

All masses live-streamed [www.churchservices.tv/easthendred](http://www.churchservices.tv/easthendred)

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

**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT** [purple]  
**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December** **9.30am** **Parish Mass** *Pro populo*  
**11.15am** **Holy Mass**  
**6pm** **Holy Mass**  
**at St Patrick's, East Ilsley**

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**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December** *St Nicholas, Bishop* [white]  
9.15am Holy Mass  
*FM Henry Lester Louis Morris 1963*

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December** *St Ambrose, Bishop, Doctor of the Church* [white]  
9.15am Holy Mass *FM Frank Mullins 1999*

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December** **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION** [white]  
9.15am Holy Mass *FM Bridget Farrelly 1999*

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December** *Of the Second Week of Advent* [purple]  
9.15am Holy Mass *FM Nancy Farrelly 1999*

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December** *Of the Second Week of Advent* [purple]  
9.15am Holy Mass *FM Canon Raab 1945*

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December** *Of the Second Week of Advent* [purple]  
*No Mass*

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**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT** [purple]  
**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December** **9.30am** **Parish Mass** *Pro populo*  
**11.15am** **Holy Mass**  
**6pm** **Holy Mass**  
**at St Patrick's, East Ilsley**

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## CONTACT DETAILS

Fr Andrew: 01235 835038 or 07976 437979

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

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

# Reflection      Born of the Virgin Mary (1)

## An Extract from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

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487 What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ.

### *Mary's predestination*

488 'God sent forth his Son', but to prepare a body for him, he wanted the free co-operation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, 'a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary':

The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life.

489 Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary. At the very beginning there was Eve; despite her disobedience, she receives the promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living. By virtue of this promise, Sarah conceives a son in spite of her old age. Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women. Mary 'stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him. After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established.'

***to be continued.....***

# FOR YOUR PRAYERS



## **PRAYER FOR THE WORLD**

We pray this week for all affected by the ravages of war and for those who have lost their lives in combat. We pray too for the people of Afghanistan and all who are seeking to prevent and relieve the onset of famine.

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

Let us pray that every country decides to take necessary measures to make the future of children a priority, especially the future of children who are suffering today.

## **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, Kitty Teasdale, Mary McNichol, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol

## **THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED**

*Week 5th-11th December:* Thomas Champ, Winifred Elphick, Kathleen Ellaway, Francis Leo Stibbs, Hilda Balcombe, Catherine Alice Couling, Rear Admiral Peter Cecil Cribson, Ann Collett.

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## CAFOD World gifts

As we rejoice in once again celebrating Christmas with our loved ones, let us spread our joy around the world by having a CAFOD World Gift under the tree. From energy saving stoves to weatherproof crops to emergency shelters, CAFOD's virtual charity gifts help transform the lives of families living in poverty. Buy online at [cafod.org.uk/worldgifts](https://cafod.org.uk/worldgifts) or pick up a catalogue from the back of church.

# East Hendred Catholic Parish

## NOTICEBOARD

### IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING CHRISTMAS MASSES

There will be four masses, as follows:

<b>Christmas Eve</b>	<b>4pm</b>	<b>Mass of the Vigil</b>
	<b>8pm</b>	<b>Mass of the Night</b>
<b>Christmas Day</b>	<b>9.30am</b>	<b>Mass of the Day</b>
	<b>11.15pm</b>	<b>Mass at St Patrick's</b>

You will be sent shortly a form on which you can indicate your preferences. This is not a 'first come first served' process: all replies will be looked at on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December and you will then be offered places, matching as closely as possible your preferences. Flexibility will help us suit you. Apart from musicians, readers, servers, and stewards no one should expect to attend more than one of these masses.

#### BOOKING FOR MASS

Booking is needed for St Patrick's because the available space is much smaller.

For Sunday Mass, people are asked to sign in with the stewards or to scan the NHS QR code on entering the church and to notify us if they test positive within a few days of being at mass. It is suggested that, before coming to Sunday Mass, people take a Lateral Flow Test.

We continue to ask you to wear masks if you are able to do so.

#### 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](mailto:aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk) if you are interested, a.s.a.p. **SYCAMORE** meets on Tuesday at 8pm on Zoom.

#### CHILDREN'S LITURGY

Advent booklets for children are now at the back of St Mary's. They are suitable for 4-7 years old. There are also SDC sheets for Advent printed out which would make a booklet for those over 7 years old. Thanks to Libby Holderness for this.

## **CATHOLIC NETWORK**

What was formerly 'the Universe', the most popular Catholic Newspaper, is no more. Instead there is a free on-line Catholic publication.

<http://www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk/>

## **ST AMAND'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*St Amand's Catholic Primary School, East Hendred - your local Catholic primary school, where 'pupils enter with excitement and leave smiling...staff, parents and pupils are part of a loving family' OFSTED Report, September 2019*

St Amand's School has had a very busy and fruitful start to the academic year 2021-22. We have been engaging with the COP 26 meetings and reflecting on how as a school community we can take better care of our world and treasure God's Creation. We enjoyed dressing up as Saints for a Light Festival and Bonfire which was well attended by many families. RISE Theatre will spend a day with us next week thinking about God's world. Soon we will be preparing for Advent and the ever-popular KS1 Nativity and the KS2 Carol Concert. We also had a visit from a Gold Medallist, Erin Kennedy, Paralympian and former pupil of St Amand's school.

St Amand's has places available for children in various year groups and if your child will be starting Reception in September 2022 please visit our friendly school to see how much a Catholic education has to offer. If you would like to know more please contact the Headteacher Mrs Ellery on [01235 833342](tel:01235833342)

Our website: [www.st-amands.oxon.sch.uk](http://www.st-amands.oxon.sch.uk)  
or email [office.3855@st-amands.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.3855@st-amands.oxon.sch.uk)

Follow us on Twitter @StAmandPrimary or  
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/St-Amands-Catholic-Primary-School-104890787965526>

## **CHURCH SERVICES LIVESTREAM**

On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November there was an interruption in our live-stream in the morning. Someone had altered the settings on the amplifier so there was no sound. Apologies for that. Nevertheless 132 were watching from 69 machines, 50 from the UK and 19 from elsewhere in the world.

## **E-NEWS FROM THE BISHOP**

Once more we sent out the diocesan E-News. No one has complained about this further intrusion. If they do, we shall have to think again. It may help others if you quietly disregard it rather than asking to be unsubscribed. There is no easy way of sending it on to some but not others.

## **SYNOD 2021-2023**

During 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 asked to produce a report to send to the diocese. These will be conflated nationally and, from September 2022 to March 2023, there will be continent-wide reflections throughout the world. Finally in October 2023, the Synod of Bishops will meet in Rome to produce a report for the Pope. Synods of Bishops are not new, nor are deliberations of Bishops' Conferences. What is new is that 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 to Fr Andrew or to John Carpenter.

To help you with responses are welcome) here are six questions:

- (1) During the pandemic, what strengths did you find in your faith and faith community? In what ways did the grace of God most clearly touch and uplift you? How much you have been disappointed or sorrowful?
- (2) What gives you joy and belonging to your parish or community?
- (3) When we say 'our Church', who is part of it - and who is missing? What areas of mission might we need to develop?
- (4) To what extent do you feel welcomed, loved, and valued for who you are in your parish or community?
- (5) What steps might the Holy Spirit be inviting the church to take in order to make our parishes and communities more welcoming inclusive and missionary?
- (6) What dreams for the church do you have?

## **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](mailto:hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk) – and particular care should be taken of those who have no access to e-mail.

See our website [www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk](http://www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk)

See also our East Hendred Catholic Parish page on Facebook.

# GIVING

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## **CHARITY: AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED**

Aid to the Church in Need is appealing for funds to help the suffering Church in Syria. The situation is desperate, and they are asking for donations. Contact 0345 646 0110 or [www.acnuk.org/sy21donate](http://www.acnuk.org/sy21donate)

## **CHARITY: DIDCOT**

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.

## **GIVING TO THE 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](mailto:hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)**

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Please let us know (if you are a UK Taxpayer) if you are happy for us to claim Gift Aid. At the start of the tax year we need anybody in Gift Aid to let us know if they are no longer taxpayers. In that case we should not make a claim.

Donations to the parish: [www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk](http://www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk)

*All masses live-streamed [www.churchservices.tv/easthendred](http://www.churchservices.tv/easthendred)*

**Parish Priest:**

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

**Parish Office:**

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



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# East Hendred Catholic Parish



**Second Sunday of Advent  
(Year C)**

**5<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Antiphons,  
Prayers and Readings**

## **Advent Wreath II**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgment; for you are our light and our salvation.

## **Entrance Antiphon**

*Populus Sion*

O People of Sion, behold, the Lord will come to save the nations, and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard in the joy of your heart. *Cf Is 30:19, 30*

## **Collect**

Almighty and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever

## **First Reading**

*Baruch 5:1-9 (RSV)*

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God. 2 Put on the robe of the righteousness from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting. 3 For God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven. 4 For your name will for ever be called by God, 'Peace of righteousness and glory of godliness.' 5 Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height and look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east, at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. 6 For they went forth from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne. 7 For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. 8 The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. 9 For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

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**Psalm 126 R/ 3**

**R/ What great deeds the Lord worked for us!  
In-deed we were glad.**

When the Lord brought back the exiles of Zion,  
we thought we were dreaming.  
Then was our mouth filled with laughter;  
on our tongues, songs of joy. **R/**

Then the nations themselves said,  
'What great deeds the Lord worked for them!'  
What great deeds the Lord worked for us!  
Indeed we were glad. **R/**

Bring back our exiles, O Lord,  
as streams in the south.  
Those who are sowing in tears  
will sing when they reap. **R/**

They go out, they go out, full of tears,  
bearing seed for the sowing;  
they come back, they come back with a song,  
bearing their sheaves. **R/**

**Second Reading**

*Phil 1:3-6, 8-11 (RSV)*

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ....8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

**Alleluia, Alleluia**

Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight :  
and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

**Gospel**

*Luke 3:1-6 (RSV)*

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tibe'ri-us Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturae'a and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'ni-as tetrarch of Abile'ne, 2 in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness; 3 and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'

**Offertory Hymn**

Hark! a thrilling voice is calling (*see below*)

**Prayer over the Offerings**

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings, and, since we have no merits to plead our cause, come, we pray, to our rescue with the protection of your mercy. Through Christ our Lord.

**Preface**

(*I De Adventu: De duobus adventibus Christi*)

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, through Christ our Lord. For he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, that when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which now we dare to hope. 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.

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**SPIRITUAL COMMUNION** *after St Alphonsus Liguori (18<sup>th</sup> 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.

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**Communion Antiphon**

*Jerusalem, surge et sta*

Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights, and behold the joy which comes to you from God.

*Bar 5:5; 4:36*

**Post-Communion Hymn** How lovely on the mountains (*see below*)**Prayer after Communion**

Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment, we humbly beseech you, O Lord, that, through our partaking in this mystery, you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth and hold firm to the things of heaven. Through Christ our Lord.

**Alma Redemptoris Mater**

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

## Scripture Reading (for the Second Week of Advent)

<b>Monday</b>	Isaiah 35:1-10	Luke 5:17-26
<b>Tuesday</b>	Isaiah 40:1-11	Matthew 18:12-14
<b>Wednesday</b>	Isaiah 40:25-31	Matthew 11:28-30
<b>Thursday</b>	Isaiah 41:13-20	Matthew 11:11-15
<b>Friday</b>	Isaiah 48:17-19	Matthew 11:16-19
<b>Saturday</b>	Eccl'us 48:1, 4, 9-11	Matthew 17:10-13
<b>ADVENT 3C</b>	<b>Zephaniah 3:14-18</b> <b>Philippians 4:4-7</b>	<b>Luke 3:10-18</b>

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**HARK!** a thrilling voice is  
sounding.  
'Christ is nigh,' it seems to say;  
'Cast away the works of darkness,  
O ye children of the day.'

Wakened by the solemn warning,  
let the earth-bound soul arise;  
Christ, her Sun, all sloth  
dispelling,  
shines upon the morning skies.

Lo! the Lamb, so long expected,  
comes with pardon down from  
heaven;  
let us all, with tears of sorrow,  
pray that we may be forgiven;  
that when next he comes with  
glory,  
and the world is wrapped in fear,  
with his mercy he may shield us,  
and with words of love draw near.

Honour, glory, might, and  
blessing  
to the Father and the Son,  
with the everlasting Spirit,  
while eternal ages run.

**HOW LOVELY** on the mountains are  
the feet of him  
who brings good news, good news  
proclaiming peace, announcing news  
of happiness:  
Our God reigns, our God reigns  
***Our God reigns, our God reigns***  
***Our God reigns, our God reigns***

You watchmen lift your voices  
joyfully as one  
shout for your King, your King.  
See eye to eye the Lord restoring  
Zion:  
***Our God reigns, our God reigns!***

Waste places of Jerusalem break  
forth with joy,  
we are redeemed, redeemed.  
The Lord has saved and comforted  
his people  
***Our God reigns, our God reigns!***

Ends of the earth, see the salvation  
of your God.  
Jesus is Lord, is Lord.  
Before the nations he has bared his  
holy arm  
***Our God reigns, our God reigns!***

# FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

## Advent Week 2

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### Monday in the Second Week of Advent

6<sup>th</sup> December

*St Nicholas, Bishop*

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**St Nicholas** (fourth century) was born in Turkey, it is thought, and became Bishop of Myra. Imprisoned under the Emperor Diocletian, he would have attended the Council of Nicæa, which opposed the Arian heresy (in which, roughly speaking, the Son was claimed to be of lesser rank than the Father). Nicholas is esteemed as patron of sailors and of children and the Christmas tradition of 'Santa Claus' (*Sinterklaas* in Dutch) is based on the kindness of St Nicholas to children, especially, in the story of the 'Pickled Boys', resurrecting them from an unpleasant fate.

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### Collect

**WE HUMBLY** implore your mercy, Lord, protect us in all dangers through the prayers of the Bishop Saint Nicholas, that the way of salvation may be open before us. 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

*Isaiah 35:1-10*

*The Return of the Redeemed to Zion*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus <sup>2</sup> it shall blossom abundantly,

and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the LORD,  
the majesty of our God.  
<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
<sup>4</sup> Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
'Be strong, fear not!  
Behold, your God  
will come with vengeance,  
with the recompense of God.  
He will come and save you.'  
<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
<sup>6</sup> then shall the lame man leap like a hart,  
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
<sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.  
<sup>8</sup> And a highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not pass over it,  
and fools shall not err therein.  
<sup>9</sup> No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.  
<sup>10</sup> And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

## REFLECTION

**TODAY'S** First Reading speaks of the transformation of the desert from a wilderness into fertile ground. We can imagine the dependency on water of a people whose land had no extensive river system. Drought was a

constant threat. The joy of Zion as a fertile place is portrayed as a place where not only do the flowers bloom but the wild beasts are gone. It becomes a place of peace and plenty. This chapter of Isaiah – chapter 35 – is surrounded by frightening oracles of judgment but seems to lead a few chapters later, chapter 40, to another account of the transformation of desert and the levelling of rough and rugged terrain, preparing a highway for the return of an exiled people from Babylon to Jerusalem. This restoration of the people is a prelude to the coming of the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, and a heightening of the sense of expectation.

## Tuesday in the Second Week of Advent

**7<sup>th</sup> December** St Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

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**St Ambrose** (c 340-397) was born in Trier – then part of Roman Gaul – and was a lawyer. In 370 he was appointed Governor of Liguria and Aemilia, living in Milan. In 374 he was chosen as Bishop – though he was still a catechumen, preparing for baptism – and he proved to be an outstanding Bishop. He stood up to the Emperor and challenged the Arians. St Augustine of Hippo was a convert of his and his writings were such that he has been ranked among the Latin Doctors of the Church.

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### Collect

**O GOD**, who made the Bishop Saint Ambrose a teacher of the Catholic faith and a model of apostolic courage: raise up in your Church men after your own heart to govern her with courage and wisdom. 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

*Isaiah 40:1-11*

*God comforts his people*

**40** Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, 'Cry!'

And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All flesh is grass,  
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people is grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

<sup>9</sup> 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!'

<sup>10</sup> Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

## Reflection

**THE LAST** verse of the reading from Isaiah 40 reassures that the Lord will come to his people as a shepherd. 'Feed', 'gather', 'carry', and 'gently lead' are all deeply reassuring as images and the description of pastoral care – which underlies the language of shepherding – is given added depth by the phrases 'in his arms' and 'in his bosom'. The flock at its most vulnerable is caught in the phrase 'those that are with young'. This is the message of comfort that the Lord gives to his people, He speaks of peace and pardon and of an enduring presence, contrasted with the transitoriness of grass that withers and flowers that fade. Nonetheless this oracle of salvation is not in any sense insipid or weak: the herald must tell it on the mountains that the Lord God comes with might. We shall know him as *hagios ischyros*, holy and mighty, as we say on Good Friday. His bringing of justice is likened to the flattening of mountains and the building of highways. This is the message that St John the Baptist will preach as the adult ministry of Jesus is about to begin. It is the message of which we need to be reminded as we wait to celebrate the coming of Christ as our Saviour and Lord.

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December**

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**THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION** does not refer, as is sometimes thought, to the conception (and subsequently the birth) of Jesus but to the conception (and subsequently the birth) of Mary his Mother. The underlying doctrine – Mary's sinlessness from the very moment of her conception – was much discussed by theologians but finally settled by Pope Pius IX on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1854. In confirmation of the doctrine, Our Lady is said to have announced herself at Lourdes to St Bernadette Soubirous as 'the Immaculate Conception'.

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## Collect

**O GOD**, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son: grant, we pray, that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. 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

*Genesis 3:9-15, 20*

### *A Showdown in Paradise*

<sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' <sup>10</sup> And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' <sup>11</sup> He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' <sup>12</sup> The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.' <sup>14</sup> The LORD God said to the serpent,

'Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all cattle,  
and above all wild animals;  
upon your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your seed and her seed;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.'

<sup>20</sup> The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

## Reflection

**THIS** extract from the story of Adam and Eve is not, of course, a historical account but a reflective – and, we believe, inspired – meditation on the origins of the human condition. It is paralleled by other Near

Eastern creation myths. How was it that such a sublime creature – man in male and female sexes – came to be limited by suffering and death? How was it that we learnt to make bad choices? Or, as I always say, how was it that, offered a stick of celery or a jam doughnut, we usually opt for the doughnut? In Romans 7:15 St Paul says this:

**I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.**

Theologians call this tendency to make wrong, unhealthy, or sinful choices 'concupiscence' and, not only for St Paul but for subsequent theologians – St Augustine of Hippo most notably – this whole notion of human frailty is explained as 'original sin', the sin of Adam who ate the forbidden fruit. What happens when Adam and Eve eat the fruit is that they have the knowledge of good and evil – symbolised by their realisation that they were naked. Once this happens, Adam, Eve, and the serpent are driven out of the Garden of Paradise. Christian thought builds on this 'original sin' of disobedience, seeing its consequences in Adam having to do manual labour, Eve having to endure the labour of childbirth, and the serpent being confined to slithering along on its belly. The serpent as tempter becomes the enemy of the man and the woman and the prophecy is that the man and woman will get the better of the serpent, the serpent being a symbol of evil. Eve herself is subsequently portrayed as the tempter – the woman who led Adam astray. As well as in St Paul, this is found in Jewish thought - see Sirach 25:24:

**From a woman sin had its beginning,  
and because of her we all die.**

All this is reflected upon in Christian devotion and spiritual writing but, for today at least – the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady – we focus on the last verse of the reading:

**The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.**

It follows, poetically at least, that if, as St Paul maintains, Christ is the New Adam – the 'Second Adam to the Fight' as St John Henry Newman put it - then Mary is the New Eve. The mediævals well understood this, and, as the fifteenth century carol 'Adam lay y-bounden' puts it:.

**Ne hadde the appil take ben,  
the appil taken ben,  
Ne hadde never our lady  
a ben hevene quen.**

## Wednesday in the Second Week of Advent

*The readings prescribed for Mass today are as for the Immaculate Conception but the following reading from Isaiah is recommended for private study.*

### Reading

*Isaiah 40:25-31*

*The Lord gives strength to the weary.*

<sup>5</sup> To whom then will you compare me,  
that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
who created these?

He who brings out their host by number,  
calling them all by name;  
by the greatness of his might,  
and because he is strong in power  
not one is missing.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,  
'My way is hid from the LORD,  
and my right is disregarded by my God'?

<sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary,  
his understanding is unsearchable.

<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
and young men shall fall exhausted;

<sup>31</sup> but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

### Reflection

**A DAY** or two ago, we had the passage from Isaiah 35 about the wilderness being turned into a fertile land and we linked it with Isaiah 40, the beginning of an entirely new section, sometimes referred to as

'Deutero-Isaiah', 'Second Isaiah'. Then we had that memorable passage, famous from Handel's *Messiah* as the aria 'Comfort ye my people'. The passage we are now studying – from later on in chapter 40 – sets out the implications of a glorious future for God's people and for Jerusalem. This it does not by spelling the future out more but by enlarging our vision of God. God is no longer seen as the God of Israel and the God of Judah, the God of two kingdoms, north and south, but as

**the everlasting God**

**the Creator of the ends of the earth (v28)**

This is how the spiritual relevance of Second Isaiah links with our understanding. We are dealing not only with the God of the Hebrews but with the God of the whole universe, the God and Father of us all, and the promise to all believers is that:

**they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,**

**they shall mount up with wings like eagles,**

**they shall run and not be weary,**

**they shall walk and not faint. (v31)**

## **Thursday in the Second Week of Advent**

**9<sup>th</sup> December**

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### **Collect for Advent 2**

**ALMIGHTY** and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

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## Reading

*Isaiah 41:13-20*

*I, the Holy One of Israel, are your Redeemer*

I, the LORD your God,  
hold your right hand;  
it is I who say to you, 'Fear not,  
I will help you.'

**14** Fear not, you worm Jacob,  
you men of Israel!

I will help you, says the LORD;  
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

**15** Behold, I will make of you a threshing sledge,  
new, sharp, and having teeth;  
you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,  
and you shall make the hills like chaff;

**16** you shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away,  
and the tempest shall scatter them.

And you shall rejoice in the LORD;  
in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.

**17** When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,  
and their tongue is parched with thirst,  
I the LORD will answer them,  
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

**18** I will open rivers on the bare heights,  
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,  
and the dry land springs of water.

**19** I will put in the wilderness the cedar,  
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;  
I will set in the desert the cypress,  
the plane and the pine together;

**20** that men may see and know,  
may consider and understand together,  
that the hand of the LORD has done this,  
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

## Reflection

**IN THE** last chapter of Isaiah, chapter 40, we learnt about the sovereignty of God – he is God of the whole world, indeed of the whole creation, and not a tribal god. But now, in chapter 41, he tells us that he will nevertheless help his chosen people, and reveals himself as the Redeemer of Israel. ‘Redeemer’ is a word which occurs several times in this part of Isaiah. It is specially to be noticed when it is linked with the favoured reference to God in Isaiah, ‘the Holy One of Israel’. At this stage ‘the Redeemer’ mostly refers to the fact that God alone can restore the fortunes of a much-diminished people. The people will regain their standing among the nations, not through their own strength but because of God’s action on their behalf. As we shall see, in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, ‘Redeemer’ takes on a transformed meaning. Meanwhile to the exiles, the promises of fertility and irrigation are there to reassure them: the help which God has in mind, according to the words of the prophet, is help of a very practical kind. The emphasis on the poor and needy is a striking example of the concern of the Jewish religion for the oppressed and, as we shall experience later in the Christian story, it is the Suffering Servant as portrayed in Isaiah – whether this is a person or a nation or both - that takes centre stage.

## Friday in the Second Week of Advent

**10<sup>th</sup> December**

**Reading**

*Isaiah 48:17-19*

*If only you had listened.....*

Thus says the LORD,  
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:  
‘I am the LORD your God,  
who teaches you to profit,  
who leads you in the way you should go.  
**18** O that you had hearkened to my commandments!  
Then your peace would have been like a river,  
and your righteousness like the waves of the sea;  
**19** your offspring would have been like the sand,  
and your descendants like its grains;  
their name would never be cut off  
or destroyed from before me.’

## Reflection

**WE ARE** in the sixth century before Christ. On the one hand we have Cyrus, the first Persian Emperor, about to defeat the Babylonians and liberate the people Israel, held in captivity in Babylon. On the other hand we have the imperative – which is there in the history books of the Hebrew Bible – that freedom, peace, and prosperity would be Israel's, if only she would be obedient to God's commandments. This might not be a new theme but, in the prophecy of Isaiah, it takes on a new depth. This is not loyalty to a tribal god and the keeping of his rules and regulations. This is discovering what is sometimes called 'ethical monotheism': there is one God, creator all that is, and his commandments are not rules and regulations but deep underlying principles which affect how human beings organise their lives in all places and at all times. This truth is foretold by the prophets and comes to fruition in the coming of the Messiah, the Advent of the Christ.

## Saturday in the Second Week of Advent

**11<sup>th</sup> December**

**Reading**

*Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26*

*God will be gracious when he hears your cry*

O people in Zion who dwell at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. <sup>20</sup> And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. <sup>21</sup> And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left... <sup>23</sup> And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and grain, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your cattle will graze in large pastures; <sup>24</sup> and the oxen and the asses that till the ground will eat salted provender, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. <sup>25</sup> And upon every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. <sup>26</sup> Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the LORD binds up the hurt of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

## **Reflection**

**WE CONTINUE** with the consideration of Jerusalem's future. What is needed is confidence in the Lord which will lead to a fertility previously unknown. Confidence requires obedience to the Lord's teaching, but such faithfulness brings great rewards. We are talking the language of apocalyptic: there is defeat for Jerusalem's enemies – 'the great slaughter' – and a great increase in the light. The moon will be as bright as the sun and the sun's light will increase sevenfold.