

**East Hendred Catholic Parish**

# **Four Candles**

**6<sup>th</sup> December – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020**



**Second Week of Advent**

# ADVENT NEWS

**AS ADVENT** begins, we can look ahead to the end of our present difficulties. St Mary's is once more open for public worship and, with the help of ChurchServices TV, we can reach not only more of you, but many more out there. On Advent Sunday attracted 133 'unique viewers'. (I am not sure what that means either, but it presumably means that of the 286 people who logged on more than 100 watched the 9.30am Mass because 113 people stayed on-line for quite a while.) You can find the link on [hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk). Meanwhile, people have been able, from 3<sup>rd</sup> December, to attend church physically but, having just come back from that Mass, I report that no one did! A reminder: midweek masses (Monday-Wednesday and Friday at 9.15am and Thursday at 10am) are now celebrated in church and people are welcome to come on a first-come-first-served basis, provided that you sign in with the QR code or tell us that you have been [hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk). The same rules about social distancing, masks &c apply as on Sundays, where booking does still need to be made. St Mary's is open each day from after Mass until 4pm but on Wednesday (9<sup>th</sup> December) the church will be used by the school for its Nativity carols and tableaux, and not open to others. Mass that day will be live-streamed only. Confession is available on demand each weekday after Mass.

We plan 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. I announced this week how the Christmas booking system works. If you didn't get the information, please contact us as soon as possible at [hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk) and we shall send it again. Booking closes on 13<sup>th</sup> December and demand is likely to outstrip supply.

Because of Christmas postal difficulties and impending holidays, the weekly bulletin will not be posted out after this week.

Fr Andrew

# East Hendred Catholic Parish



**Second Sunday of Advent  
(Year B)  
6<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Antiphons,  
Prayers and Readings**

## **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*

## **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.

## **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, one God, for ever and ever

## **First Reading**

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

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>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.

**Psalm 85: 9-14 R/ 8**

**R/ Let us see, O Lord, your mercy  
and grant us your salvation.**

I will hear what the Lord God speaks;  
he speaks of peace for his people and his faithful,  
and those who turn their hearts to him.  
His salvation is near for those who fear him,  
and his glory will dwell in our land.

Merciful love and faithfulness have met;  
justice and peace have kissed.  
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth,  
and justice look down from heav'n.

Also the Lord will bestow his bounty,  
and our earth shall yield its increase.  
Justice will march before him,  
and guide his steps on the way.

**Second Reading**

*2 Peter 3:8-14 (RSV)*

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! <sup>13</sup>But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

Alleluia, **Alleluia**

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

**Gospel**

*Mark 1:1-8 (RSV)*

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way;  
3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight—'

4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of  
repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And there went out to him all the  
country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized  
by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed  
with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts  
and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, 'After me comes he who is  
mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down  
and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with  
the Holy Spirit.'

### **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.

### **Communion Antiphon**

*Ierusalem, 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*



Cantor (1st time)

Drop down ye heavens from above,

Full

and let the skies pour down righteousness.

### **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 3B</b>	<b>Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11</b>	
	<b>1 Thessalonians 5:16-24</b>	<b>John 1:6-8, 19-28</b>

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

We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

## **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, Rose

## **THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED**

Week 6th-12th December: Winifred Elphick, Kathleen Ellaway, Francis Leo Stibbs, Hilda Balcombe, Catherine Alice Couling, Rear Admiral Peter Cecil Cribson, Ann Collett, Robert Driscoll, William Brown, Kevin Peter Mulhern

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# NOTICEBOARD

## **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION 8<sup>th</sup> December**

Tuesday's Mass of the Immaculate Conception will be with music. 9.15am.

## **SCHOOL NATIVITY TABLEAUX**

The Church will be shut on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. Mass will be live-streamed.

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

We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the World of God and a life of prayer.

## **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, Rose

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## **GOOD COUNSEL NETWORK**

Prayers and Fasting are asked on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December for the end of abortion and euthanasia. See [www.GoodCounselNetwork.com](http://www.GoodCounselNetwork.com) for details. You are also urged to write to Priti Patel, the Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DE asking her not to support the introduction of Buffer Zones round abortion centres. Witness outside the Oxford centre is gentle, principled, and peaceful and has saved lives. Previous Home Secretaries have decided that to end this ministry would be inappropriate.

## **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.

## **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) helps with the poor locally.

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

## CHILDREN CELEBRATE

Our Team have produced resources, which are available at the back of St Mary's. See also [www.hundredcatholicparish.org.uk](http://www.hundredcatholicparish.org.uk) and the link below.



### CLG Advent Booklet 2020.pdf

See also: [www.cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy](http://www.cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy)  
Children's liturgy general guidelines\_(doc, 59kb)

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### 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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Buy a few Christmas dinners and help for the homeless: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/>

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**emmaus OXFORD From 1<sup>st</sup> December, donations to their Christmas Challenge can be doubled through the Big Give. More details**

<https://emmaus.org.uk/oxford/>



# 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.

If you have a friend who is feeling more isolated than usual this year, who perhaps hasn't been able to get to Mass or there haven't been any, Universalis can help alleviate the isolation by maintaining contact with the prayer life of the universal Church. Or if you have a younger friend, with all the distractions of life around and ahead, Universalis is a solid preparation and continuing foundation for an 'Apostle for life'. Even for people who never take their noses out of the shiny black rectangles they are all attached to, they will see *through* the device into a wider (indeed, infinite) world.

It is very simple indeed to give a Universalis registration code as a present. [Our blog post gives all the details.](#)

### **New Every Day 2021**

This inspiring e-book came out for the first time last year and it proved popular then, which is why we have published the new edition. "New Every Day" has 365 chapters, one for each day of the year 2021. It celebrates not only every day but also a huge number of saints: over 600 of them. There are spiritual readings for every day and for many of the saints of the day. There are biographies of the saints and over 300 illustrations. (If you have the Universalis app or program, "New Every Day" combines the About Today and Spiritual Reading pages; but quite a few people buy the e-book anyway, because they have an e-book reader or just for its general convenience).

"New Every Day" is available from Amazon for the Kindle and from Apple in ePub format. They both allow e-books to be given as gifts. [Our blog post has the details.](#)

# FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

7<sup>th</sup>– 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Advent Week 2

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## Monday 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 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.

## **THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

**Tuesday 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

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 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

**TWO DAYS** 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'. Yesterday's feast, the Immaculate Conception, interrupted the *lectio continua* and so we found ourselves missing out that memorable passage, famous from Handel's *Messiah* as the aria 'Comfort ye my people'. It was read last Sunday however. Today's passage – 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

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

**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

**YESTERDAY** we learnt about the sovereignty of God – he is God of the whole world, of the whole creation, and not a tribal god. But today 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

**11<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.

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