

DEANERY OF ST EDMUND CAMPION

ENGLISH MARTYRS—

VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE PASTORAL AREA

www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk

East Hendred Catholic Parish



THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

12th – 19th December 2021

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

12th – 19th December 2021

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

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

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT [rose]
Sunday 12th December
9.30am Parish Mass Pro populo
11.15am Holy Mass
at St Patrick's, East Ilsley
6pm Holy Mass FM Fanny Gorton 1937

Monday 13th December St Lucy, Virgin, Martyr [red]
9.15am Holy Mass
FM Henry Lester Louis Morris 1963

Tuesday 14th December St John of the Cross, Religious,
Doctor of the Church [white]
9.15am Holy Mass FM Edward Woods 1937
2pm St Amand's School Carols (1)
6pm St Amand's School Carols (2)

Wednesday 15th December Of the Third Week of Advent [purple]
9.15am Holy Mass
RIP John Joseph Noel Francis (Jack) Parker 1982

Thursday 16th December Of the Third Week of Advent [purple]
9.15am Holy Mass FM Charles Gorton 1937

Friday 17th December O Sapientia [O Wisdom] [purple]
9.15am Holy Mass RIP Isabelle Langley

Saturday 18th December O Adonai [purple]
No Mass

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT O Radix [O Root of Jesse] [purple]
Sunday 19th December
9.30am Parish Mass Pro populo
11.15am Holy Mass
at St Patrick's, East Ilsley
6pm Holy Mass FM Bridget Woods 1937

CONTACT DETAILS

Fr Andrew: 01235 835038 or 07976 437979

aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

hundred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Reflection Born of the Virgin Mary (2)

An Extract from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Immaculate Conception

490 To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary 'was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.' The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as 'full of grace'. In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.

491 Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.

492 The 'splendour of an entirely unique holiness' by which Mary is 'enriched from the first instant of her conception' comes wholly from Christ: she is 'redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son'. The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person 'in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' and chose her 'in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love'.

493 The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God 'the All-Holy' (*Panagia*), and celebrate her as 'free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature'. By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long. 'Let it be done to me according to your word. . .'

to be continued.....

FOR YOUR PRAYERS



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

Fr Anthony Fagan

Week 12th-18th December: Robert Driscoll, William Brown, Kevin Peter Mulhern, Harry Wells, Charles Hunt, Margaret Ann Crossman, Lawrence Roberts, Patricia Mary Tonge, Isabelle Langley, Mary Thorne, Beatrice Cahill, Kathleen Wood



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 or pick up a catalogue from the back of church.

East Hendred Catholic Parish

NOTICEBOARD

PLAN B

Our present procedures have already been close to 'Plan B'. Please do a Lateral Flow Test before attending Sunday Mass – no certification necessary – and continue to wear masks and practise social distancing. Particular care is needed in the entrance area of both churches. The kind of growth in infection spoken of by the scientists could mean that one case in our congregation on Sunday 15th December grew to 32 cases on Christmas Day. That scenario is improbable but worth bearing in mind!

READERS, SERVERS, STEWARDS

We would welcome help with reading at Mass, serving, and stewarding. Have a word in the first instance to Fr Andrew or Maria who will point you in the right direction.

CHRISTMAS MASSES

You should have been sent 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 13th 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 if you are interested, a.s.a.p. **SYCAMORE** meets on Tuesday at 8pm on Zoom.

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

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

or email office.3855@st-amands.oxon.sch.uk

Follow us on Twitter @StAmandPrimary or

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/St-Amands-Catholic-Primary-School-10489078796526>

CHURCH SERVICES LIVESTREAM

On Sunday 5th December 191 were watching from 64 machines, 110 from the UK and 64 from elsewhere in the world.

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. In place of the questions in last week's Bulletin, I am sending out the diocesan leaflet separately (in glorious technicolour if your printer does colour...)

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 – and particular care should be taken of those who have no access to e-mail.

See our website www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk

See also our East Hendred Catholic Parish page on Facebook.

GIVING

CHARITY: CRISIS AT CHRISTMAS

Give A Christmas To Remember | Donate To Crisis At Christmas

Ad-<https://www.crisis.org.uk/>

Crisis at Christmas can be a real turning point for someone who's homeless. Donate today. Your gift of £29.06 could give someone hot meals, a place to stay and year-round support. UK's Charity for Homeless. We Will End Homelessness. Donate & transform lives.

CHARITY: DIDCOT

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: 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

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

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

Parish Priest:

aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Parish Office:

hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk



mary's
meals

| a simple solution to world hunger

Donate



Give until 31 January 2022 and your donation will be doubled by a group of generous supporters, up to £1.6 million – meaning we can reach even more hungry children with school meals.



Gbenda and Miatta



REGULAR
GIFTS
DOUBLED

*

East Hendred Catholic Parish



**Third Sunday of
Advent
(Year C)
12th December
2021**

**Antiphons,
Prayers and
Readings**

Advent Wreath III

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Saviour and King of the ages.

Entrance Antiphon

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

Gaudete

Phil 4:4-5

Collect

O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity; enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. 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

Zephaniah 3:14-18 (RSV)

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has cast out your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear evil no more. ¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: ;'Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. ¹⁷ The LORD your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing ¹⁸ as on a day of festival. ;'I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it.

Revised Standard Version Bible, Ignatius Edition, copyright © 2006, by the Division of Christian Education, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

Canticle of Isaiah *Is 12:2-6 (Roman Missal)*

R/ With joy you will draw water from the well of salvation.

Truly God is my salvation,
I trust, I shall not fear.
For the Lord is my strength, my song,
He became my salvation. **R/**

Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his name!
Make his mighty deeds known to the peoples,
declare the greatness of his name. **R/**

Sing a psalm to the Lord for he has done glorious deeds,
make them known to all the earth!
People of Zion, sing and shout for joy
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. **R/**

Second Reading

Philippians 4:4-7 (RSV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. ⁶ Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Alleluia, Alleluia

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 3:10-18 (RSV)

¹⁰ The multitudes asked John, ;'What then shall we do?;' ¹¹ And he answered them, ;'He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.;' ¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ;'Teacher, what shall we do?;' ¹³ And he said to them, ;'Collect no more than is appointed you.;' ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, ;'And we, what shall we do?;' And he said to them, ;'Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.;' ¹⁵ As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered them all, ;'I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' ¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people.

Offertory Hymn

On Jordan's bank (*see below*)

Prayer over the Offerings

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray, be offered to you unceasingly, to complete what was begun in sacred mystery and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work. Through Christ our Lord.

Preface*(II De Adventu: De duplici expectatione 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 all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mary longed for him with love beyond all telling. John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came. It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in praise. 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.

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

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

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

Communion Antiphon*Dicite: Pusillanimes*

Say to the faint of heart; Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us. *Cf Is 35:4*

Cantor (1st time)

Drop down— ye hea - vens from— a - bove, —

Full

and let the skies pour— down right- eous - ness.

Post-Communion HymnHail to the Lord's anointed (*see below*)**Prayer after Communion**

We implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults and prepare us for the coming feasts. 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.

The English translation and chants of the Roman Missal © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved

Scripture Reading

ADVENT WEEK 3

13 th Monday	Numbers 24:2-7,15-17	Matthew 21:23-27
14 th Tuesday	Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13	Matthew 21:28-32
15 th Wednesday	Isaiah 45:6b-8,18,21b-25	Luke 7:18b-23
16 th Thursday	Isaiah 54:1-10	Luke 7:24-30
17th O Sapientia	Genesis 49:2, 8-10	Matthew 1:1-17
18th O Adonai	Jeremiah 23:5-8	Matthew 1:18-24
ADVENT 4C	Micah 5:1-4	
	Hebrews 10:5-10	Luke 1:39-45

Jordanis oras prævia

ON JORDAN'S bank, the Baptist's
cry

announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every breast from
sin;

make straight the way for God
within,

prepare we in our hearts a home
where such a mighty Guest may
come.

For thou art our salvation, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without thy grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick stretch out thine
hand,
and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth and let thy light restore
earth's own true loveliness once
more.

All praise, eternal Son, to thee,
whose advent doth thy people free;
whom with the Father we adore
and Holy Ghost for evermore.

Charles Coffin

HAIL to the Lord's anointed,
great David's greater Son!

Hail in the time appointed, his
reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to
set the captive free,
to take away transgression, and
rule in equity.

He comes with succour speedy to
those who suffer wrong,
to help the poor and needy, and
bid the weak be strong.
To give them songs for sighing, their
darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and
dying,
were precious in His sight.

He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth,
and love, joy, hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains shall
peace the herald go;
and righteousness in fountains
from hill to valley flow.

O'er every foe victorious, he on his
throne shall rest.
From age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all-blest.
The tide of time shall never his
covenant remove.
His Name shall stand for ever, that
Name to us is Love.

James Montgomery (Psalm 72)

Food for the Journey

Advent Week 3

Monday in the Third Week of Advent

13th December

St Lucy, Virgin, Martyr

St Lucy (died c.304) is thought to have been born in Syracuse, in Sicily, and martyred under the Emperor Diocletian. She was probably the daughter of a wealthy Christian family but martyred after refusing a pagan suitor. St Lucy is mentioned in the Roman Canon and, because her name means 'light', her feast is on one of the darkest days of winter.

Collect

MAY THE glorious intercession of the Virgin and Martyr Saint Lucy give us new heart, we pray, O Lord, so that we may celebrate her heavenly birthday in this present age and so behold things eternal. 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

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17

A star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre out of Israel

And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel encamping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, ³ and he took up his discourse, and said,

'The oracle of Balaam the son of Be'or,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,

⁴ the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
 who sees the vision of the Almighty,
 falling down, but having his eyes uncovered:
⁵ How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
 your encampments, O Israel!
⁶ Like valleys that stretch afar,
 like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the LORD has planted,
 like cedar trees beside the waters.
⁷ Water shall flow from his buckets,
 and his seed shall be in many waters,
his king shall be higher than Agag,
 and his kingdom shall be exalted.....

¹⁵ And he took up his discourse, and said,

‘The oracle of Balaam the son of Be’or,
 the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
¹⁶ the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
 and knows the knowledge of the Most High,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
 falling down, but having his eyes uncovered:
¹⁷ I see him, but not now;
 I behold him, but not nigh:
a star shall come forth out of Jacob,
 and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.

REFLECTION

HAVING spent much of Advent with Isaiah’s prophecies featuring as the Old Testament reading, today we begin to explore material in other books relevant to the coming Kingdom of the Messiah. We begin with the Book of Numbers and the strange and primitive story of Balaam (Numbers 22-24). Balaam is a gentile prophet from pre-history: the story of Balaam and his talking donkey is told as a fable in chapter 22. We are now in chapter 24 and back to a more historical mode. Balak the King of Moab is warned by Balaam the prophet that a future ruler of Israel will crush the Moabites. This prophecy will true in the tenth century BC when King David vanquishes Moab and makes it a vassal state. Early Christian writers saw in Balaam’s prophecy to Balak a reference to the coming of Christ, especially pertinent because Jesus is seen as King in David’s house and lineage.

Tuesday in the Third Week of Advent

14th December

St John of the Cross, Religious, Doctor

St John of the Cross (1542-1591) was born in Spain and entered the Carmelites. A friend of St Teresa of Avila, he led the reform of the order, despite many trials and tribulations from his brethren. His spiritual writing is famous for his reflections on the mystery of the Cross and he is remembered for the phrase 'the dark night of the soul'.

Collect

O GOD, who gave the priest St John an outstanding dedication to perfect self-denial and love of the Cross, grant that, by imitating him closely at all times, we may come to contemplate eternally your glory. 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

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13

The Wickedness of Jerusalem

Woe to her that is rebellious and defiled,
the oppressing city!
² She listens to no voice,
she accepts no correction.
She does not trust in the LORD,
she does not draw near to her God...
⁹ 'Yes, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples
to a pure speech,
that all of them may call on the name of the LORD
and serve him with one accord.
¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed ones,
shall bring my offering.
¹¹ 'On that day you shall not be put to shame
because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me;
for then I will remove from your midst

your proudly exultant ones,
and you shall no longer be haughty
in my holy mountain.
¹² For I will leave in the midst of you
a people humble and lowly.
They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD,
¹³ those who are left in Israel;
they shall do no wrong
and utter no lies,
nor shall there be found in their mouth
a deceitful tongue.
For they shall pasture and lie down,
and none shall make them afraid.'

Reflection

ZEPHANIAH, like other prophets, was preaching before the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity – so before 587 BC. He is linked with the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC) and at the time the Assyrians were the dominant power in the region, though their power was declining. Zephaniah's proclamations are full of metaphors and similes and his reproaches in chapter 3 are directed towards Judah and the wickedness of Jerusalem. The prophet concludes by suggesting that in the end there will be a faithful remnant, a holy people. This notion of a faithful remnant is a strong theme in the prophetic literature and it is later seen by Christians in terms of the Kingdom of God. Those who respond to the call to repentance and the life of the baptised belong to and pray and work for the coming Kingdom, inaugurated by the Messiah.

Wednesday in the Third Week of Advent

15th December

Reading

Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21-25

*Showers, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness*

I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷ I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe,
I am the LORD, who do all these things.

⁸ Shower, O heavens, from above,
 and let the skies rain down righteousness;
 let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth,
 and let it cause righteousness to spring up also;
 I the LORD have created it...

¹⁸ For thus says the LORD,
 who created the heavens
 (he is God!),
 who formed the earth and made it
 (he established it;
 he did not create it a chaos,
 he formed it to be inhabited!):
 'I am the LORD, and there is no other.'...

²¹ Declare and present your case;
 let them take counsel together!
 Who told this long ago?
 Who declared it of old?
 Was it not I, the LORD?
 And there is no other god besides me,
 a righteous God and a Saviour;
 there is none besides me.

²² 'Turn to me and be saved,
 all the ends of the earth!
 For I am God, and there is no other.

²³ By myself I have sworn,
 from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness
 a word that shall not return:
 'To me every knee shall bow,
 every tongue shall swear.'

²⁴ 'Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me,
 are righteousness and strength;
 to him shall come and be ashamed,
 all who were incensed against him.

²⁵ In the LORD all the offspring of Israel
 shall triumph and glory.'

Reflection

THE PHRASE *Rorate caeli de super* is hard to render in English. In the translation we use for the Advent Prose it comes out as 'Drop down ye heavens from above'. In today's reading the verse is:

⁸ **Shower, O heavens, from above,
 and let the skies rain down righteousness;**

**let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth,
and let it cause righteousness to spring up also. (v8)**

A Messianic prophecy which talks about rainfall is a less accessible metaphor for us nowadays, perhaps, than the idea of salvation 'sprouting forth'. In context, whatever the metaphor, the salvation and the righteousness are the consequence of Cyrus King of Persia defeating the Babylonians and restoring God's people to Jerusalem. And yet, even within the limits of that one historical event, here prophesied, is a much more momentous event, the coming of the Messiah. It's a bit like a prophecy that a child might go on to be Captain of the School only for the child to develop into being winner of a Nobel prize. To be fair, the prophet glimpses the bigger picture and its possibilities because he is envisaging God being worshipped as God throughout the earth, a Saviour for all who turn to him. This is the vocation of Israel to be a light to the nations (Is 42:6; Is 49:6), a theme taken up by Simeon when Jesus is presented in the Temple (Lk 2:32). The Messiah as the glory of Israel and the light to lighten the gentiles is a favourite theme of St Luke who makes reference to the same idea in Acts 13:47 and Acts 26:33. We are looking for a Saviour, a Saviour to whom every knee will bow. (v.23).

Thursday in the Third Week of Advent

16th December

Reading

Isaiah 54:1-10

The Eternal Covenant of Peace

54 Sing, O barren one, who did not bear;
break forth into singing and cry aloud,
you who have not been in travail!

For the children of the desolate one will be more
than the children of her that is married, says the LORD.

² Enlarge the place of your tent,
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;
hold not back, lengthen your cords
and strengthen your stakes.

³ For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,
and your descendants will possess the nations
and will people the desolate cities.

- ⁴ Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;
be not confounded, for you will not be put to shame;
for you will forget the shame of your youth,
and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.
- ⁵ For your Maker is your husband,
the LORD of hosts is his name;
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called.
- ⁶ For the LORD has called you
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
like a wife of youth when she is cast off,
says your God.
- ⁷ For a brief moment I forsook you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.
- ⁸ In overflowing wrath for a moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,
says the LORD, your Redeemer.
- ⁹ For this is like the days of Noah to me:
as I swore that the waters of Noah
should no more go over the earth,
so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you
and will not rebuke you.
- ¹⁰ For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Advent Antiphons

Sung before and after the Magnificat at Evening Prayer and used as Alleluia verses at Mass

17th December – O Sapientia

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence. *Sir 24:3; Wis 8:1*

18th December – O Adonai

O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm. *cf Ex 3:2, 24:12*

19th December – O Radix Jesse

O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer: Come and deliver us, and delay no longer. *cf Is 11:10, 45:14, 52:15; Rom 15:12*

20th December – O Clavis David

O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open: Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. *cf Is 22:22, 42:7*

21st December – O Oriens

O Morning Star, splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. *cf Mal 4:2*

22nd December – O Rex Gentium

O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay. *cf Is 28:16; Eph 2:14*

23rd December – O Emmanuel

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour: Come and save us, O Lord our God. *cf Is 7:14*

*The first letters of the Latin titles taken backwards (E-R-O-C-R-A-S) form a Latin acrostic - **Ero Cras** which translates as 'Tomorrow, I will be [there]', mirroring the theme of the antiphons.*

O Sapientia [O Wisdom]

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence. *Sir 24:3; Wis 8:1*

Friday 17th December

Reading

Genesis 49:2, 8-10

The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah

² Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob,
and hearken to Israel your father...

⁸ Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.

⁹ Judah is a lion's whelp;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him up?

¹⁰ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Reflection

THE ADVENT Antiphons, sometimes known as 'the Great 'O's', are seven titles of the Messiah, distilled from the Old Testament. He is Adonāi, or leader of the House of Israel. He is the Root of Jesse, from which sprung the House of David. He is the Key of David, unlocking the gates of death. He is the Morning Star, heralding the Dawn. He is the King of the Nations and he is Emmanuel, God-with-us. What is striking about all these descriptions is that implicitly they are descriptions of Almighty God. The final one – God-with-us – celebrates the central theological truth for Christians that God in Christ took our flesh and dwelt – or rather 'dwells' – in our midst. In today's first reading, we are right back in pre-history, in the time of the patriarchs. Here Jacob, known as Israel, is saying farewell to his sons. He is dying but not before prophesying the fortunes of Judah. He would have had no way of knowing or guessing that the future of Judah would present himself as the Son of God but he knew that the sceptre of Judah, the symbol of kingship, would be one to whom 'shall be the obedience of the peoples'.

O Adonai

Saturday 18th December

O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm. *cf Ex 3:2, 24:12*

Reading

Jeremiah 23:5-8

The Righteous Branch of David

⁵ 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

⁷ 'Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when men shall no longer say, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' ⁸ but 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' Then they shall dwell in their own land.'

Reflection

IN THE seven days leading up to Christmas, one might imagine that the readings would match the Advent Antiphon of the day. Today the Antiphon is O Adonai and point us further back to God revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush and on Mount Sinai. The first reading, by contrast, refers us to the Son of David, who saves Judah and Israel, bringing them back from exile back to their own land. This second Exodus – this time not from Egypt but from Babylon – becomes a new and important point of reference, more important, Jeremiah seems to say, than the first Exodus. God the deliverer is described as 'The Lord our Righteousness' (v.6) which is a play on the name Zedekiah, the puppet king who rebelled against the Babylonians, leading to the destruction of Jerusalem.