

ST MARGARET'S PAGE

4th Sunday of Advent - 20th December 2020 Year B



Fr Peter writes:

The current nativity scene in St Peter's Square in Rome has aroused ridicule with its collection of ceramic figures that include on the fringes of the scene, an astronaut gazing out on to the scene. Personally, I appreciate the audacity of the proposal because it raises interesting questions about how to portray the birth of Jesus Christ, and the making of the ceramic statues itself contains a story of rebirth. The ancient town of Castelli in the Abruzzi, a poverty-stricken part of Italy main industry is dying, the making of ceramics. Then in 1965 for a period of ten years art students started making ceramic figures for the crib building up to a set of fifty-two figures. Each year a different town offers a crib set to display in St Peter's Square. This year it was the turn of Castelli, and hence the figures arrived in the square through they are creations of fifty years previously.

These figures tell a story that needs to be heard, that Jesus is born once in a stable in Bethlehem but He is being born today in our hearts, in the Church, and in the world. The crib is not an historical re-enactment but a presentation of faith. Every Italian crib has townspeople attending to their daily business, buying and selling, marrying, talking in the piazza. Jesus is born into the world, not an idealised world, because He is a person and not an idea. The inclusion of the astronaut might seem bizarre now but in the late 1960s it was the wonder of science, almost akin to religion to land a man on the moon with a landing craft with less computer software than the average car possesses today. This optimistic vista about the world has long disappeared with the destruction of so much life since then, along with the erosion of the institutions, societies, clubs, parishes that allowed people to form communities and anchor their collective lives. Yet this gesture, like the addition of contemporary figures in Italian cribs points to all humanity finding salvation through the birth of the Christ Child.

Perhaps the figures do look of their time, the late 1960s and early 1970s but I admire that student project of bringing the birth of Jesus into their town through their artisan expertise: to rebuild their community and livelihood by inviting the light of Christ into their work. This ceramic crib scene and the collective endeavour to make the different figures raises a fundamental question about religious art. Assuming that Catholic religious art tends towards the symbolic and figurative, can it only be religious if the figures wear traditional dress and are composed in traditional ways? If so where does this place the Christian of today? Is the Christian restricted to looking back at the past and always melancholic about something lost and now out of reach? Such a stance would turn faith into sentimentality to join all those images of the perfect family Christmas and perfect childhood. Such Romantic sentiments bear little relevance to adult life as lived, nor do they appreciate that for culture and family life to flourish it always has to be created and renewed. The Church offers the message of salvation for today, and today's work of art might include artistic and symbolic representations of the sick, the doctor, the refugee, and the modern slave. Jesus has come to give them and us the message of hope. Planting images of gurus and celebrities of the time, men and women mostly of straw, is not creating a work of art but virtue-signalling to an arcane elite. Every work of art overcomes that level of individuality to represent broader concerns, so the crib

Mass Times & Liturgy Services		
Sunday	8:30 am, 10:30 am and 6:30 pm	
Mon. Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat		10.00 am
Thursday	Eucharistic Service	10.00 am
Saturday	Adoration	10:30 - 11:00
Rosary	Mon, Tue, Wed and Sat (via Zoom) (please email the parish office for the link)	9.30 am
Confessions	By request	

displays the full range of humanity that Jesus has come to save.

Everyone knows the account of the birth of Jesus and it is easy for that knowledge to become second nature, and accept that Jesus would just have to be born in stable. The stark reality of a stable birth is thus domesticated down to our level. The journey to Jerusalem, precipitated by the decree announcing the Census, allows Jesus, adopted son of Joseph, to be born in David's town. The lack of alternative accommodation on arrival makes the stable the best option for the birth of the infant king.

Providence, symbolic action, divine intervention and personal choice are all intimately entwined in this account. Together they drive the story of the birth of Jesus forward into his public life through to the Cross and Resurrection. The same power of grace, the same moments of divine opportunity to follow God's will, the same symbolic actions that explain who we really claim to be, and personal choices mark our lives too. The Son of God has entered our condition as it is, not as it should be. He comes to us now into our fragmented lives to offer Good News, the effective forgiveness of sin and the grace and peace of His presence. Good News only Jesus can offer.

This is the last newsletter of the year, so may I wish you all a very blessed Christmas and Happy New Year. Most of us will want to forget a large part of 2020 and so we look in hope towards 2021 in the light of Jesus Christ coming into the world.

Paean of thanks

May I thank everyone who has helped sustain the life of the Parish in 2020, a difficult year. Through the generous offers of help the Church has remained open for Sunday Mass and Week-day Masses, clean and safe for parishioners to attend owing to the quiet work of a dedicated band of stewards and cleaners.

Thank you to our musicians for providing music for Sunday Mass and especially to Caroline Estorninho for managing the sustained transmission of Mass through YouTube both on Sundays and weekdays, as well as the different courses and parish events over the last nine months.

Despite the gloom in the media there is much to be thankful for at St Margaret's. We are still here full of hope that sometime in the future our Parish will be able to open more fully and continue to provide for the spiritual and social needs of the community.

Thank you once again.
Fr Peter

St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church

• E-mail: stmargaretonthames@rcdow.org.uk • Website: www.stmargaretsrchurch.co.uk
Parish Priest: Canon Peter Newby. Deacon Joseph Estorninho; Parish Administrator: Cynthia Souza; Bookkeeper: Ann Edes
Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9.30 am—12.30 pm

Mass Intentions

Saturday 19th December – Sunday 27th December

19-Dec	Sat	10.00 am	For unemployed seeking work	
20-Dec	4 th Sunday of Advent	8.30 am	For all young people	
		10.30 am	For you the people	
		6.30 pm	Laurie Inman RIP and May Nelson (Anniv)	Lily McCaw
21-Dec	Mon	10.00 am	Cathy McKendry's intentions	Rachel McKendry
22-Dec	Tue	10.00 am	For unemployed seeking work	
23-Dec	Wed	10.00 am	Arthur Heutz's recovery	Rachel McKendry
24-Dec	Thu-Christmas Eve	3.30 pm	For all young people	
		5.00 pm	For all young people	
		7.00 pm Christmas Vigil	Catherine Sweeney RIP	Maureen Davis
		10.00 pm Midnight Mass	For unemployed seeking work	
25-Dec	Fri - Feast of the Nativity	8.30 am	Jan Z. Konczak RIP	Margaret Ocieпка
		10.30 am	For you the people	
26-Dec	Saturday (Feast of St Stephen)	12.00 pm	For unemployed seeking work	
27-Dec	Sunday in the Octave of Christmas (The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph)	8.30 am	Deceased relatives and friends of Winter family	Winter
		10.30 am	For you the people	
		6.30 pm	Laurie Inman RIP and May Nelson (Anniv)	Lily McCaw

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK

Adriana Posse de González (Valeria's Mum), Rachel Rose, Fr Paul Bigirwa, Patricia Mary Picton (Mary), Arthur Mathewson, Pat Friel, Mary Reagan, Pauline Slawson, Ben, Carol Samba, Colin Bartram, Gerry McEntee, Rose Williams, Peter Coughlan, Hilary Sudell, Rose Lorden, William Hamilton, Luca, Mary Arnold, Cesar Juan Urrutigoity, Mary Ethel Arnolda, Sydney and Patricia Parkes, Judith Thomas, Wanda Ostrowska, Christopher Browne, Antonella Sesta, Margaret Masterson, Bernard Sharratt, Carmen Ruibal, Ann Macpherson, Chris McLoughlin (son of Olga) and Kevin Sweeney

Recently deceased- Ashmore Rudolf RIP, Janet McAllister RIP

Anniversaries- Stanislaus Leszczynski, David Mathewson, Patricia Margaret O'Callahan, Helen Colsey, Charles Bendy, Marje Kensit, Alice Bendy, Thomas Goulds, Timothy Exley, Mary Sharratt, Ida Verbruggen

Entrance Antiphon:

Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

Response to the Psalm

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

ANGEL TREE



Sadly St Margaret's long tradition of providing gifts to needy families is unable to go ahead this year due to difficulties presented by the Covid pandemic.

Early next year, we hope to organise alternative ways of harnessing your generosity to the benefit of the most needy in our community so please look out for further details in the Spring.



Christmas Masses

Places to attend Christmas Masses will need to be booked in advance to ensure we can respect safe distancing.

Masses will be held on:

Christmas Eve at 3.30 pm, 5:00 pm, 7:00 pm & 10:00 pm

Christmas Day at 8:30 am & 10:30 am

Bookings are now open (link as below)
<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/stmargaretsonthames/events/>

If you know anyone who does not have access to the internet and would like to reserve a place, please ask them to call the parish office who will do it for them.

20th December - 4th Sunday of Advent 2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14,16

27th December - The Holy Family of Genesis 15:1-6,21:1-3

Psalm 88(89):2-5,27,29

Psalm 127(128):1-5

Romans 16:25-27

Colossians 3:12-21

Luke 1:26-38

Hewbrews 1:1-2

COVID- 19 Vaccines

Statement from the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (Dec 3rd, 2020)

The development of a vaccine against COVID-19 presents an important breakthrough in protecting others as well as oneself from the virus; a virus which has not only caused a global pandemic and led to a huge loss of life but has also placed a great burden on healthcare workers and systems.



Each of us has a duty to protect others from infection with its danger of serious illness, and for some, death. A vaccine is the most effective way to achieve this unless one decides to self-isolate.

At present, debate concerns the use of the vaccines developed by Pfizer & BioNTech, Moderna, and Astra Zeneca. Some have questioned the use of the Astra Zeneca vaccine since it has been developed from cell-lines originating from the cells of an aborted foetus in 1983. The [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) and the [Pontifical Academy of Life](#) have expressed the view that one may in good conscience and for a grave reason receive a vaccine sourced in this way, provided that there is a sufficient moral distance between the present administration of the vaccine and the original wrongful action. In the COVID-19 pandemic, we judge that this grave reason exists and that one does not sin by receiving the vaccine.

Both the Pfizer & BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have a different source since they are mRNA-based vaccines. On 2 December 2020, the Pfizer & BioNTech vaccine was approved for use in the UK.

Each Catholic must educate his or her conscience on this matter and decide what to do, also bearing in mind that a vaccine must be safe, effective, and universally available, especially to the poor of the world.

Catholics may in good conscience receive any of these vaccines for the good of others and themselves. In good conscience, one may refuse a particular vaccine but continues to have a duty to protect others from infection.

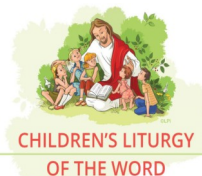
Advance Notice

Feast of the Epiphany
Wednesday January 6th
Mass at 10:00 am and 6:00 pm



Children's Liturgy

Before lockdown the Parish managed to offer children's liturgy at the Sunday 10:30am Mass on a regular basis. Since the lockdown began this activity had sadly ceased and the Parish Pastoral Council feels it is time now to resume this activity but by zoom, rather than face to face.



If you had been involved beforehand or would like to become involved in providing a children's liturgy, at a different time to 10:30am Mass please make contact with the Parish Office. I do not wish to be a pessimist but the parish should think of providing such a service till Easter. If we can return to normal before then all well and good.
Fr Peter

**Congratulations to our
100 Club Winners**

December Winners

1st Prize - £100/-

No. 19 - Jimmy Green

&

2nd Prize—£50/-

No. 32—Richard Poxton

Cheques will be in post shortly.

Numbers are picked by a Random Number Generating Website.

Admission arrangement for Catholic Schools

If you wish to apply for a place at a Catholic Primary school for 2021, you will need a Certificate of Catholic Practice (CCP). Fr Peter is happy to sign these forms for regular parishioners on

Saturday, 9th January 2021 11.00 am—12.30 pm

Please bring along your forms to the Church Hall to have the documents signed and stamped.

Confirmation



The next Confirmation course, for those in Year 9 and above will begin on **Saturday 16th January at 5:15pm** to be followed by Mass at 6:30pm.

This year the Course is being led by Deacon Joseph Estorninho, Joseph Kilsby, a recent graduate from St Marys and Kirsten Roy, long standing parishioner.

If you would like to participate please contact Fr Peter at the Parish Office to obtain an application form.

Thank you
Fr Peter

First Holy Communion Sessions 2021

The course will begin on **Saturday 9th January 2021 at 5:15pm**. The first session will be a joint session for children and parents, and will be followed by Mass at 6:30pm.



ADVENT IN ST MARGARETS

The Joy of Hope – Parish Advent course



The zoom Advent course was a big success and we were joined by about 26 participants for our Monday & Wednesday sessions. I want to thank Angie, Leslie and Gavin for their help with this event.

We plan to offer an online course aimed at ways to deepen our prayer life early in the new year. More details will be available soon.

Please find - **“Every Day is Christmas Day”** - for families and individuals to use during the Christmas Octave. (Click here to download)

Every day is Christmas Day
A journey through the Christmas Octave
25th December – 1st January



The St Vincent de Paul Society have assembled nearly 12,000 packs for the homeless and have distributed them throughout England and Wales. Each Vinnie Pack contains a thermal hat, thermal gloves two pairs of thermal socks, toothpaste, toothbrush, wet wipes, Pavement magazine, pen and information sheet and 5,000 of the packs have a reusable face mask included. The contents of each Vinnie Pack cost around £3.50 and donations to sponsor packs would be most welcome. Donations can be transferred to SVP **Vinnie Packs, a/c 46088237 sort code 60-60-04** or cheques made out to SVP can be sent to **Vinnie Packs, PO Box 72264, London SW1P 9EZ**. Any assistance is really appreciated.

Christmas Cards for our senior citizen parishioners & Dalemead Care Home



Special thanks to all the children who have made cards for our senior citizen parishioners and the residents of Dalemead Care Home. They will be delivered this week. If you have not dropped yours back, please do so today (20th).

Celebrate every day during the Christmas Octave

The Christmas Octave runs from Christmas Day until the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God on 1st January. “On the 8th day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...” Everyone is familiar with the carol “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” And although some people have already thrown their Christmas tree to the curb and taken down their Christmas decorations, there are the reminders that “Remember, Christmas is not just one day.”

True, Catholics recognize that Christmas is not only on December 25. The secular carol reminds us there are twelve days of Christmas to January 6, the Epiphany. But the Church’s liturgy actually emphasizes the eight days or octave of Christmas. The Church recognizes that the days of the Christmas Octave are repeating the solemnness of Christmas for eight days, concluding on a high note with another solemnity that echoes the solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord; the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is celebrated on January 1st.



Why not consider coming to church on one of the other days during the Christmas Octave? Mass will be celebrated every day during the Octave at 12 noon, apart from Sunday 27th, Feast of the Holy Family, when Mass will be at 8:30 am and 10:30 am.



**HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
A BRIGHT & PROSPEROUS NEW
YEAR**

