



THE ARCHANGEL

St. Michael's School and Parish • Harts Lane • Burghclere • RG20 9JW

No. 14

December 2018

Rorate Coeli

Dear Parishioners,

December marks the beginning of our soul's preparation for the great feast of Christmas. Too often we concentrate on the material comforts and consolations of the season, to the detriment of our minds and souls. It is a good thing to look forward to music and merriment, but the celebratory delights of Christmas should not distract us from the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation, when a Virgin Mother laid God almighty in a manger full of hay.

The Church has set aside a time of spiritual preparation for Christmas. In the old days, Catholics were bound to fast and abstain from all meats, dairy, and egg products during Adventide. Today we are obliged to very little, but this does not mean that Advent is less important. It is a time to slow down, to take stock of the things that matter most and perform some inner housekeeping. All the Advent stories, hymns, and family customs are attuned to this notion and make for proper spiritual preparation, in anticipation for the great graces of Christmastide.

Our fondest memories of childhood often center around Christmas. The winter cold makes the home a cozier place where, in an ideal world (!), the children settle down more easily and enjoy playful activities that bear meaning for the feast day to come. Families should endeavor to organize themselves so that the children understand the importance of Advent and share in the Church's impatience to greet the coming of the Savior. We have included a few ideas in this newsletter.

It is important to remember that the family home is the only world our younger children experience. If this little world is organized according to a Catholic

spirit, their little minds and hearts will become imbued with Catholicism. In this age of rampant materialism, the family home is the only place on earth where they are able to learn the true meaning of Christmas. Parents should therefore be on the lookout as to how they can help their children understand Christmas as the Church understands it.

Please take time to organize your homes in such a way that Advent becomes a reality, not just a thing of purely historical or liturgical interest. It is a time of penance, extra prayer, and learning. It is, in a sense, a time of mourning: we remember Adam and Eve's first sin which plunged mankind into spiritual darkness and death. They and their descendants were condemned to a long period of waiting and longing until the Savior should appear Who would free them from their sins. The Jesse Tree is a very good way of reminding children that Christmas is still quite a recent thing!

The Christmas presents we all look forward to receiving should be seen as a reward for our prayers and efforts in preparing our souls for Christ's birth. Two millenniums ago, all this world had to offer the Christ Child was the dirty and cold poverty of the stable. Let us try to offer Him something better: a soul cleaned by sacramental confession and made homely and warm by the practice of penance and virtue. There is no need for anything elaborate. Our Lord desires only generosity and love. His presence will do the rest. A soul nourished by a fervent Christmas Communion is the best abode He could wish for.

The community joins in wishing you a fruitful Advent and a very happy and holy Christmas.

Fr. John Brucciani



Christmas Symbols

The famous symbols of the feast of Christmas are the decorated evergreen and the crib.

What is the origin of the Christmas tree? Why is Christmas not Christmas without it? I do not know the answer for certain, but I do have an idea.

A well-chosen and well-decorated Christmas tree is magnificent. Bathed in light with branches laden with decorations and presents, it draws the eye and fills the heart with delight and joy. Children become excited and clap their hands.

The Christmas tree recalls the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, which was the most beautiful of trees. It was bathed in an ethereal light and rich with exotic fruits. This tree stood in the middle of Paradise, majestic and mysterious. "And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat" (Genesis 3).

The Paradise Tree constituted the defeat of Adam and Eve, but from this disastrous defeat came the promise of the Savior. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. She will crush your head" (Genesis 3). The Fathers have always understood these words as the promise of a Savior to come, born of the woman who would crush the devil with her heel. Our Lady did so, by her Immaculate Conception.

The Tree of Life was always at the center of God's mysterious Providence. By the tree, man lost his eternal heritage. By the tree, man won the promise of a Savior and a Companion, the Word of God, the Christ, Son of God, God made man. A tree gave the wood for the crib, on which God found His first repose in this world. A tree also furnished the wood of the cross, on which God entered His last repose. The Tree of Paradise and its fruit destroyed man. The tree of Calvary and its fruit, Jesus, restored man, elevating him to a state greater than if he had never sinned.

Gifts, richly decorated and colorful, are placed at the foot of the Christmas trees. These are like the fruits of grace and of virtue which flow ceaselessly from the tree of the Cross, bringing joy, relief, and comfort to body and soul.

The Christmas tree is evergreen and vigorous. The Tree of the Cross will never die, its fruits and its graces will always be there: Stat Crux, dum revolvitur orbis! The cross stands erect, tall and strong, full of light, full of life, green and vigorous while the world turns and spins from age to age, from folly to folly.

Thus we consider the Tree of Life, the Tree of the Cross, the Tree of Christmas.

The crib has its own tale to tell. It is the eternal testimony of the true message of Christmas. By it, we remember the first Christmas so long ago and so different to Christmas today. We remember the principal actors, their words, their actions, their places in this divine epic that we call the Salvation of Man, of which God is at the same time Author and principal Actor.

The scene is well known to us: the stable, the animals, the curious shepherds; the young woman, virgin and mother, leaning over her first-born, the personification of maternal tenderness and devotion. And Saint Joseph, amazed and silent, his gaze fixed on the mystery of the Virgin Mother tending to her God.

This scene is precious to us. Gazing upon the Child, we remember our own childhood. Our memories return to the happy, unworried past, when we were still virgin and innocent. Life was simple: our parents loved us, and that was all! We envy the Child Jesus in the arms of His Mother, surrounded with love and watched by Joseph. We miss the sort of security only family can offer.

... and the angels see us and shake their heads. Ah! If only we could understand! "The Lord hath appeared from afar to me. Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jeremiah 31,3). The crib reminds us of the beginnings of what was to become God's great family. For Mary is our mother too, and God our brother, and Joseph our Protector. We have nothing to fear.



Advent with Our Lady



During the sacred time of Advent, we think of Mary as she nears the end of her pregnancy.

Ever since the Word was made flesh in her womb, Mary has tasted and enjoyed the delights of the divine.

Not only does her soul

overflow with grace, thus bringing her spiritually closer and closer to God, but now her body, under the action of the Holy Spirit, produces the very author of grace, Jesus Christ!

It is not by chance that the feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception falls at the beginning of Advent. The Immaculate Conception and Our Lady's Divine Maternity are intimately linked.

Our Lady was preserved from all sin from the very first moment of her conception in order that the flesh and blood she was destined to provide to her divine Son, would be untainted and free. Satan would never be able to boast that he had once dominated something belonging to Our Lord. Our Lord's divine humanity was destined to be invested with dignity divine, and then offered to God in sacrifice for the remission of sins. The offering had to be pure and untainted. Satan must have no hold or influence over it, however small, however short.

Mary's humanity, from which the second Person of the Trinity would take, was preserved from all sin from the very first moment of its existence. But this is only half the mystery.

Mary was not merely born clean. She was made holy of a holiness that God alone can look upon without being dazzled and dazed.

When the angel Gabriel greets Our Lady, his words express delight, admiration and wonder: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee.* We could imagine what is going on in Gabriel's mind: *Such beauty, such virtue, such power, such love and submission, such dedication! The Lord is truly with this Lady, and she with Him!*

In his dogmatic declaration on the Immaculate Conception (*Ineffabilis Deus*), Pius IX says: "From the first instant Mary was loved by God more than all creatures. He found most extreme pleasure in

her. He loaded her with his graces in a wonderful way, more than all the angels and the saints."

Mary's fullness of grace was not static but dynamic. It grew in proportion to her love and devotion and the various steps of her participation in the plan of redemption. Her fullness was exponential, and her progress ever more rapid as she approached ultimate sanctity.

Mary's initial fullness of grace, which she received at the very moment of her conception in her mother's womb, surpassed the grace of all the saints put together. Her virtues, in their initial state, surpassed the heroic virtues of the greatest of the saints.

Along with grace, Mary received a plenitude of the moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. She was supremely virtuous of supernatural virtue, whereby she merited not only her place in heaven but ours as well. For just as a queen may earn for others pardon and recompense for all her subjects, so too Mary, our most excellent family member (after Our Lord), merited for us all the joys of heaven.

It is commonly taught that Mary also received the use of reason and the gift of infused knowledge along with her plenitude of grace. This means that Mary knew God and loved Him from the very first moment of her existence. It also means that Mary's merits began from the very moment of her conception. Her infused knowledge would have taught her all that she needed to know to fulfil her vocation in the best way possible. For example, it allowed her to easily comprehend the archangel Gabriel's mysterious words at the moment of the Annunciation.

Mary was therefore, after Her divine Son, the first in the order of creation. God contracted with His Mother the tightest and most intimate union possible between God and creature. The only union more intimate still would be the hypostatic union, when the Word became flesh. Mary's supreme holiness makes her the first in the order of divine adoption. To her is given the privilege of primacy in the order of grace, making her, in union with her Son, mediator between God and man. God commits to Mary every grace destined for man.

But there is something more extraordinary. Her fullness of grace also makes her the *worthy* Mother of God. Think of it! The divine Child has a Mother worthy of Him. More another time. †

WEEKLY CONFESSIONS

- Saturday: 11:00
- 1st Friday during Holy Hour
- Sunday before Masses

BENEDICTION & ROSARY

Sunday 18:00

CHAPEL CLEANING - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

SATURDAYS - 2:30 PM

PLEASE VOLUNTEER TO HELP CLEAN FROM TIME TO TIME. IT IS ALWAYS THE SAME PERSONS WHO DO IT, AND THEY NEED HELP. GOD'S HOUSE IS WORTH OUR BEST EFFORTS.

22nd December - big chapel clean



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**Memorial Poinsettias
Christmastide**



If you wish to place around the altar poinsettias in memory of a loved one, please fill out and hand in the forms (soon available) before December 15. The January newsletter will list the names of those remembered. Holy Mass will be offered for them and for their benefactors on January 1st, Feast of the Circumcision and Octave Day of Christmas. Poinsettias (for the sanctuary and church): £10 a pot.

FAST DAYS FOR SSPX 3RD ORDER MEMBERS

- Oct. 31 - Vigil of All Saints
- Dec. 7 - Vigil of Immaculate Conception



“WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? THEY DON'T LET US PRAY ANYMORE.”

	Liturgical Calendar December 2018	Masses
1	Saturday of our Lady (1st Saturday)	7:30 / 12:00
2	First Sunday of Advent	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		17:30 Vespers/Benediction
3	St. Francis Xavier, Confessor	7:15
4	St. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
5	Feria of Advent	7:15
6	St. Nicholas, Bp. Conf.	7:15
7	St. Ambrose, Bp. Conf. Dr. - 1st Fri - No Holy Hour	7:15
8	Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	7:30 / 12:00 (sung)
		17:30 Benediction + Procession of our Lady
9	Second Sunday of Advent	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		18:30 Vespers/Benediction
10	Feria of Advent	7:15
11	St. Damasus I, Pope & Confessor	7:15
12	Feria of Advent (Our Lady of Guadalupe)	7:15
13	St. Lucy, Virgin & Martyr	7:15
14	Feria of Advent	7:15
15	Feria of Advent Christmas Holidays begin 15:30	7:30 / 12:00
16	Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		18:00 Benediction
17	Greater Feria of Advent	8:00
18	Greater Feria of Advent	8:00
19	Ember Wednesday (fasting, abstinence for 3rd order)	8:00
20	St. Thomas, Apostle	8:00
21	Ember Friday (fasting, abstinence for 3rd order)	8:00
22	Ember Saturday (chapel deep clean 2:30pm)	7:30 / 12:00
23	Fourth Sunday of Advent	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		18:00 Benediction
24	Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord	8:00
25	NATIVITY of OUR LORD (Confessions from 23:00)	00:00 (Sung) / 9:00
26	St. Stephen, Deacon & Protomartyr	8:00 / 12:00
27	St. John the Evangelist, Apostle	8:00
28	Holy Innocents, Martyrs	8:00
29	St. Thomas of Canturbury, bp. mart.	7:30 / 12:00
30	Sunday in the Octave of Christmas	7:30 Low
		9:00 Low
		18:00 Benediction
31	Octave of Christmas	8:00
1	Circumcision of Our Lord - Octave Day of Christmas	8:00 / 12:00 (sung)
		Holy Hour 11:00 to welcome New Year

Rosary for St. Michael's School

Thanks to parent initiative, the holy rosary will be recited between masses each Sunday for the protection and welfare of St. Michael's School. This extra spiritual help comes at a time when State intervention seeks to erode the fundamental parental right to their children's education.

Evening benediction and rosary will continue as usual.