



THE ARCHANGEL

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

No. 24

December 2019

Arrival and Return

Advent is a holy time of preparation. The Church shrouds her altars in penitential colours and bids her children to withdraw a little from the world to meditate on and make ready for the celebration of our Lord's first coming, long ago on Christmas night.

Christmas is the opening scene of a great drama in two acts. The first act was played out two thousand years ago in the faraway land of Palestine. It lasted for thirty-three years and culminated in our Saviour's passion, death, resurrection and ascension.

Part II opened with the descent of the Holy Spirit on our Lady and the apostles. It has been playing ever since and tells the story of God's spiritual invasion of a sinful world.

The main character of Part I was Christ in the flesh. The main character of Part II is Christ in His Mystical Body. Throughout the entire story, Christ communes with man. He shares in his joys and sorrows and shows Himself as a faithful companion, resolute in His desire to bring us home to His heavenly Father.

This great drama will close with our Lord's second coming. Advent begins with our Lord's dread prophecy which tells of the time when "there will be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars ... men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world." (Lk. 21:25)

Our Lord's second coming will be His last. The die will be definitively cast, as the dread Judge of the living and the dead will reveal to us our true colours, where we stand and whom we serve: God or Satan.

The contrast between our Lord's first and second comings could not be greater. The picture of a loving mother cradling a peaceful child will give way to the "Son of man coming with great power and majesty." At our Lord's first coming, shepherds did not fear to approach the stable. At the second coming, both saints and sin-

ners will tremble as the angels call us from our graves to render a public account of our lives before the Sovereign Lord and all of mankind.

The holy time of Advent is a liturgical preparation for the great feast of Christmas. It is also a time to remember that the past two thousand years and the present years of our short lives are an advent, a time which precedes the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to a world and a race that belongs to Him.

The Church bids us, therefore, to ready ourselves for our Lord's return. We must be careful that the weeks before Christmas mark a renewed focus on the affairs of our soul and the souls of those for whom we have charge. Families should impress on their children that Christmas cheer is for Christmas and that Advent cheer is of a different kind. It includes daily sacrifice, an extra prayer, a good confession, Saturday mass, and some spiritual reading. Sweets and other goodies disappear, and water replaces wine and other palatable drinks at table. Tea and coffee are taken without sugar, and every slice of toast has to choose between butter or jam, never both. And then there is screen time...

Christmas was celebrated with greater joy and relish in the old days when there were fewer things to buy at the shops and online streaming had not been invented. We were used to simpler fare at table, fewer toys and exploring the outdoors. The idea of self-denial did not make us break into a cold sweat or make us feel depressed.

Today our wills are weak and flabby, debilitated by the many sources of instant gratification within immediate reach. Nevertheless, we must try to make Advent different from the time that comes before and after. It is a time of preparation, of expectancy, of reading, and of family rosary. Let us not waste it.

Fr. John Brucciani, Prior

Books and Holiness

Once upon a time the wording "reading" summoned up mental pictures of pages and books, dusty libraries and comfortable chairs, perhaps a pipe or a cigar, most certainly a glass of whisky, and the pleasant experience of relaxation and adventure.

In an age of computers and iPads, reading has become old fashioned. A good portion of children no longer know how to read. They may be able to spell out words, but they do not understand what words mean. They can no longer decipher a complex sentence, appreciate grammatical structure, follow and understand the precise use and genius of punctuation and word-play.

Many homes have gradually emptied their bookcases of books. These are now replaced by DVD's, hundreds of them. It is hard to find a house where books are the first thing that meets the eye. Rather, it is a large flat screen of ugly proportion: a gaping wound in the demise of culture.

Books keep us in contact with civilization. They are the means whereby the past becomes present. Their stories transport us back in time. Whether it be fiction or fact, we learn how men were, what they believed in, what motivated them. Little by little we see the interaction between man and history and between man and society. We learn how each influences the other. We come thus, by dint of reading, to a better understanding of the present. And we learn what to expect for the future. Reading is like listening to old Grandma's stories. We listen because we know she knows so much more than we do. Old and bent, she has life's lessons to give. Imagine then the wealth of knowledge, experience and insight that is contained on a single shelf of books! Good books, that is.

If books are vital to our education, they are also vital to our sanctification. I speak here of those books that treat of God and the soul. A minimum of spiritual reading is essential if our relationship with God is to deepen. Saint Augustine tells us : "He who wishes to be with God must pray and read often. When we pray, we talk to God. When we read, God talks to us."

We have here, perhaps, a first solution to our aridity and slovenliness of soul. Prayer is dry and often beset with distraction. It becomes difficult and tasteless, and our soul suffers for it. Yet, how can we hope to im-

prove if we do not feed our mind and heart through reading? Prayer is not merely a repetitive vocal exercise. Nor is it some vague sentiment searching for an imaginary mystical experience. Prayer is a conversation with God which requires that we let Him speak to us in order that we may speak back to Him. He speaks to us through spiritual reading. God enjoys the privacy of secluded and silent reading in order to communicate with us.

St. Alphonsus writes: "When you receive any special light in reading, or any instruction that penetrates the heart, it will be very useful to stop, and to raise the mind to God by making a good resolution, or a good act, or a fervent prayer. It is useful then to interrupt the reading, and to offer a prayer, and to continue to pray as long as the lively impression lasts. Let us imitate the bees that do not pass from one flower to another until they have gathered all the honey that they found in the first."

St. Jerome says that man is like a mill. The flour it produces is never better than the grain that it grinds. Bad books and bad/pointless movies can produce only bad or superficial thoughts. Good books produce healthy minds and a happy hearts. There is no better ground for grace to flourish and prosper.

Ask for a book for Christmas. And read it!

SATURDAY 14TH DEC.

ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL
ADVENT FAIR
PORTAL HALL - BURGHCLERE

Food
Refreshments
Stalls
Bric a Brac
Games

Open 1 pm Raffle Draw 3 pm Close 4 pm

The Truth of Fiction

No one likes better a good story than the young child whose faculties of imagination and understanding have not yet been destroyed by movie screens and computer games.

The child's imagination is as yet vigorous and virgin. Healthy pastimes, such as frequent explorations of the garden, long hours leafing through a good art book, dressing up and play acting, banging together extravagant creations in Dad's workshop (that soon fall apart), or simply daydreaming (yes, that can be a healthy pastime), all these nourish the imagination with simple delights of sight, sound and touch. They make it strong and fertile, powerful enough to travel through space and time and to become part of another world.

Such a child can truly commune with the storyteller's tale. It is a case of kindred spirits. We hold out our hand and the raconteur takes us on a journey to another world where giants walk the earth, animals talk, elven folk dance and the hero never loses.

What makes a child believe so easily the fantastic tales we read to them? And why do they delight to hear them over and over again?

A real story lasts forever. It appeals to generations for ever after. Our Western literary culture is heavily influenced by the great classics of Greece and Rome: Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Their genius, like that of other authors more recent, lies in their ability to shape their tales according to the pattern of reality as it is, as God has made it. It is a reality which can be influenced by human endeavor and even marred by evil intention, yet in the end it comes to and plays out as God, the ultimate story maker, originally intended. We speak of God. They spoke of the gods. Yet in the end they portray man as part of a greater whole, which sooner or later comes together through the action of an outside agent we call Providence and others call destiny.

The innocence in children helps them see that the world does not stop at what can be merely seen and touched. It is something so much greater. They have a real capacity for contemplation, for seeing further than the senses. They are able to grasp at eternal truths. They truly believe that good is good and evil

is evil, that good ends in reward and evil in failure and destruction, just like in a fairytale.

Fairytales delight the young not because children believe anything one tells them, but because they correspond to the sort of reality that children think is (or should be) the norm. Their innocence and intellectual virginity clamour for knights that are handsome and chivalrous, and for a princess that is both beautiful and virtuous. This is why they listen intently, ears pricked and eyes ablaze with descriptions of distant battles, colourful banners, bloody war and sweet victory. Instinct tells them that this is how it should be. Life is about love, love lost, love found. It is about becoming a hero. And so they listen and listen. Then they come back for more of the same. Good stories are their haven and their heaven in a world that is grey and sad, and all too often encumbered by house chores and homework.

In short, children's minds are better attuned to fable and myth. This is why they love them to the point of making them part of their daily lives, playing out chapters of a story in costume dress and brown paper helmets. Families should therefore encourage reading good literature as a major pastime at home. Not only does it provide all the benefits of spelling, grammar and basic text comprehension, but it also helps a child stay in touch with ... *reality*. Traditional fiction, though sought after as a temporary reprieve from everyday cares and worries, actually paints a complete picture of life. The heroes and heroines of yesterday become saints and martyrs of today. A well read adult understands that his or her own life is part of a greater story, that of sin and redemption, a story that must be played out as the divine Author intended. So we resign ourselves to play our part, to "do our bit." This is just another way of accepting our duties of state which are the key to happiness, for ever and ever after. *



WEEKLY CONFESSIONS

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

BENEDICTION & ROSARY

Sunday 18:00

CHAPEL CLEANING - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

MONDAY 23RD DECEMBER - 9:30 AM

WINTER DEEP CLEAN

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.

Children and Candles

Please NEVER allow your child to light candles to our Lady unsupervised. The wax sculptures children so delight in making require hours of cleaning. Lighted candles have been known to drop to the floor. Please be careful.

**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**

- Dec. 7 - Vigil of Immaculate Conception

ON 28TH DEC., FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, HOLY HOUR AND MASS WILL BE OFFERED IN REPARATIONS FOR THE SINS OF ABORTION.

HOLY HOUR 11 AM, FOLLOWED BY MASS.

Collection for Seminarians

The District Superior (GB and Ireland) has requested a second collection on each 1st Sunday of the month to help pay for our seminarians' Seminary fees. Fees are £7500 per year. Presently, the district pays for 2 seminarians from GB and five from Ireland. We are grateful for your generosity in helping the SSPX achieve its first purpose of forming future priests.

Liturgical Calendar December 2019**Mass**

	Liturgical Calendar December 2019	Mass
1	First Sunday of Advent	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		18:00 Benediction
2	St. Bibiana, Virgin & Martyr	7:15
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. 1st Fri - Holy Hour 18:00	7:15 / 19:00
7	St. Ambrose, Bp. Conf. Doc. - 1st Sat.	7:15 / 12:00
8	Immaculate Conception of the BVM	7:30 Low
	Second Sunday of Advent	9:00 Sung
	2nd Collection for seminarians	18:00 Benediction
9	Feria of Advent	7:15
10	Feria of Advent	7:15
11	St. Damasus I, Pope & Confessor	7:15
12	Our Lady of Guadalupe	7:15
13	St. Lucy, Virgin & Martyr	7:15
14	Feria of Advent	7:15 / 12:00
15	Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		18:00 Benediction
16	St. Eusebius, Bishop & Martyr	7:15
17	Greater Feria of Advent	7:15
18	Ember Wednesday	8:00
19	Greater Feria of Advent	8:00
20	Ember Friday	8:00
21	St. Thomas, Apostle	7:30 / 12:00
22	Fourth Sunday of Advent	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		18:00 Benediction
23	Greater Feria of Advent	8:00
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 / 12:00
	12:00 Mass in Reparation for Crimes of Abortion - 11h00 Holy Hour	
29	Sunday in the Octave	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		18:00 Benediction
30	Octave of Christmas	8:00
31	Octave of Christmas	8:00
1	Circumcision of Our Lord - Octave Day of Christ	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.