



THE ARCHANGEL

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

No. 36

January 2021

God's Peace

Dear parishioners,

When our Lord first came on Christmas night, He wished us peace through the ministry of His angels: "Peace on earth to men of good will".

There does not seem to be much peace in the world at the present time. There are too few men of good will. This year Christmas was all but cancelled. Without Christmas, without Christ, there will only ever be strife and turmoil.

How fortunate we are, therefore, to have been counted with the shepherds and to have received the invitation to come and adore our newborn Saviour. Every time a child is baptized, the angels assemble and hail Christ's advent to the soul in the form of sanctifying grace. They silently sing a new Gloria and reiterate the promise of peace.

If the soul be faithful, it will experience peace and contentment, however difficult life may become. The angels' prayer is God's promise: if we remain of good will, He will grant us peace.

In times of strife, our good will is put to the test. Difficult circumstances create a sense of urgency. Urgency stirs up feelings of insecurity and fear which cloud our reasoning and influence our judgement. We are then at risk of losing our peace of soul - and of mind too.

It is easy for us to associate peace with Christmas. The crib is a picture of calm and adoration. The long awaited Messiah is finally come. God has fulfilled His promise, our salvation is near. What more could we wish for?

And yet, a few hours before His agony in the garden, at the Last Supper, our Lord reiterated His gift of peace: "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you.*" But this time, He added: "*not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" (Jo. 14:27)

Our Lord knew that His own peace of soul was about to be sorely tried. His anguish in Gethsemani would draw from Him a sweat of blood. And yet, despite this sure knowledge, He spoke to His apostles of peace, and bid them not to be afraid.

The Passion is just as much a picture of peace as the crib and the manger but it can only be seen and deciphered with the eyes of faith. Despite the depth of her own sorrow, Mary alone understood what was happening on Calvary: her divine Son reconciling the world with God. Her heart was broken, but it was at peace. Calvary is the only place on earth where suffering and peace can coincide.

Present troubles might only be the beginning of greater trials ahead. Many of us find the unpredictability of current circumstances to be a heavy burden. Some search feverishly for knowledge of future events. Some try to interpret what is going on in order to decide a course of action "if it were to happen." Many are unsettled and look for answers to questions and possible scenarios.

We should, therefore, remember our Lord's promise and gift of peace. It is His gift to us each Christmas, and He would have us take it, accept it, keep it and believe in it. It is a peace "not as the world giveth." It might entail change of circumstance, hardship and poverty, but it brings to us a confidence and calm that the world is incapable of giving us.

Good will is the key to receiving Christ's peace and keeping it, come what may. As we brace for a difficult new year, one that will require much prudence in our attitude to events, we must be vigilant. Good will entails that we understand difference of opinion and judgement and that we lend others only the best intentions. Christ's peace is not the absence of conflict, but the tranquility of soul. We must lead ordered lives, centered around Christ, whether He lies in the manger or upon the Cross. In those desperate circumstances, our Lord remained in full control, carrying out His plan of redemption in a way He only could understand.

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world." (Jo. 16:33)

The community wishes you all God's peace this New Year, and confidence in His mysterious but loving Providence.

Fr John Brucciani, Prior

Christ, source of true freedom

“What shall we do?” Various groups of people go to John the Baptist to ask him for moral instruction because they recognize his wisdom and moral authority. In every age people have gone to ask their religious preachers and sages for moral guidance: “What shall we do?” Many of the world’s religions offer responses to this fundamental question on how we should order our lives, how we can live well as human beings. So, every religion and culture has its great moral teachers: Confucius, the Buddha, Muhammad, Moses, and today, John the Baptist, who was the last and greatest of God’s prophets.

Many people would number Jesus Christ among the world’s great moral teachers. But we should not: Christ is different. For Christianity, contrary to a commonplace popular belief, is not principally about being nice. It’s not primarily about following a set of rules and commandments, obeying laws and moralistic preaching. Tragically, this is what Christianity has often been reduced to, or this is how it’s been perceived, and perhaps, rejected, by very many.

Jesus Christ comes first of all as the Redeemer and Saviour of every human being. He is the salvation we are all equally in need of, and the perfection of what Jesus gives us, namely, eternal life in union with the Holy Trinity. Union with God is something that can only ever be achieved by his grace and never by our own human efforts or merit. So, Jesus comes to give us eternal happiness, and he does so because he loves us. To all who freely accept this gift of grace, Christ becomes their unique source of joy. Hence, we Christians are exhorted by St Paul to “rejoice always”.

We rejoice because of who we are in Jesus Christ. For our faith is not principally about observing moral values, or the gritted-teeth keeping of laws, or being good for fear of a policeman God. **It’s not principally about what we shall do, and more about who we shall be.** For Jesus comes to establish a new relationship between us and God. Through him, by the grace given in baptism, we can enter into Jesus’ own relationship with God. So, we can also dare to call God *Abba, Father*; we have been reborn in the Holy Spirit as daughters and sons of God in the Son of God. This new relationship of filial love between God and Man that Jesus offers all people is something we do not—and cannot—earn. It is just freely given out of gratuitous love for us. But it is up to us to accept this pure gift, this grace.

Thus, Christianity was seen by St Paul as a liberation from the Law and its many ethical injunctions, commandments, and religious observances. One could now rejoice and remain in the peace of Christ because righteousness wasn’t earned through what we did. Hence, when asked “What shall we do?”, the apostles just taught the first Christian converts to “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). For salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone, through a loving relationship with God which he establishes, and not through our works.

However, this does not mean that Christians have no moral life, or need not wonder what we should do as children of God. For when the rich man asks Christ “What must I do?,” Jesus tells him to do something that surpasses the Mosaic Law and commandments: “Follow me” (cf Mt 19:16-21). Hence, we, who are made sons and daughters of God by grace, are called to follow the Son of God: to learn from his Wisdom, to imitate his example of love, to behave as a child of God does. Therefore, the Christian moral life is called by the Catechism, “Life in Christ”. But what we do is always, first and foremost, founded in the fundamental grace of who we are; being precedes doing, and we have been loved into being by God and been saved by the gift of Christ’s incarnate and crucified love.

St Paul puts it like this: “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1), which means that we have been saved from sin by Jesus Christ so that, empowered by the Spirit and in co-operation with his grace, we will act with complete freedom as Jesus does. For our true freedom is found in embracing the good, in choosing to love, in saying ‘Yes’ to God; a faith-filled surrender to Love and its ways. This is what baptism in the Spirit entails: the Holy Ghost comes as fire, as the burning charity that purifies us of sin, of our disordered desires, and of our selfishness, so that our loving becomes Christ-like. Over a lifetime, then, we grow-up to reflect the reality of who Christ has made us to be, and thus to exhibit the “glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). So, what shall we, as free children of God, do? St Augustine says: “Love, and do what you will.”*



Christmas & the Holy Family

Christmas time is synonymous to "family time." Of all the year's feast days, Christmas is most certainly the one we seek to celebrate in the company of our parents, brothers and sisters.

Christmas is perhaps the time when we realize just how much we love our family. How many happy childhood memories include Christmastide? The decorated house, the sense of excitement, school holidays and Christmas carols, cold outside, cosy inside ... and plenty to eat!

Christmas and family go so well together because Christmas is the celebration of the greatest and most famous of families: the Holy Family. Jesus, Mary, Joseph form an earthly Trinity of love and mutual giving.

God decided to come to this world through the ministrations of family. Wishing to live our human existence to the full, He cradled in His mother's arms, He suckled at her breast, He learnt to walk and to talk. In short, He was the child of a family and although He was God, in His human nature He relied on His family for everything.

We sometimes forget just how much Jesus owed to His family. Like any other son of Adam, Our Lord owed everything to His mother and Saint Joseph. They taught him all He needed to know to make His way in the world: His words, His letters, His schooling, His trade ... even how to cook.

More importantly, Our Lord (in His humanity) learned of Mary and Joseph what sort of Man to be. From His Mother he learned purpose, tenderness and compassion. From Saint Joseph He learned the love of labour, the sense of responsibility and dogged determination. His parents shaped His manhood, one that would be one day ready to shoulder the sins of mankind.

The Holy Family is thus the model and archetype of what every family should be. It is the school of adulthood, the place where children are made ready to take on their destiny in this world. Without it, or if the family is deficient, boys and girls grow up with stunted souls. They remain irresponsible children, psychologically and spiritually immature, useless tools of God's Providence for the betterment of this world. God cannot use them to extend the Kingdom of Heaven here below.



Memorial Poinsettias Christmastide Mass of the Circumcision

On the Feast of the Circumcision, Octave Day of Christmas, Holy Mass was offered for and in memory of the following souls. Many thanks for your kind offering

- Edward Stratton
- Pauline Coward
- Joseph Kamau
- Janek Brzoza
- Edward Barton-Lister
- Elise Barton-Lister
- Robin Morris
- Marjorie & Hynie Morris
- Ronnie Blyth
- Victor Blyth
- Percy Moore
- Sadie Moore
- Robert & Josephine Jackson
- Keith Batten
- Stephen Patrick Keating
- Agnes Mary Keating
- Maurice & Winifred Keating
- Bernadine M. La Chapelle
- Rudy La Chapelle
- Doreen Shadbolt
- Ron & Margery Delafield
- John Smallwood
- Roger & Rosie St John
- Alfred & Veronica Williams
- Otto & Rosaleen Hansen
- Ralph & Vivien Blatchford
- Mr & Mrs Wiggains,
- Dr. Evans, M Waring
- J & W Dracup, D & B Oxley, Friends
- Sudlow-O'Byrne Families
- Ronald Warwick
- Margaret Brucciani
- Anna Theresa Joyce & John Paul Joyce
- Mrs June Patrick
- Mr Mark Patrick
- Michael & Jeanne Parkes

Although Our Lord's vocation was unique, He desired to share it with His mother and Saint Joseph. They became, as His lawful parents, willing partners in the world's redemption. Without Joseph's fidelity, springing from an acute sense of duty, there would have been no incarnation. For it is a fearful thing to espouse the Mother of God and become Her protector. And without Mary's generosity and loving acquiescence to God's will, there would never have been a handmaid of the Lord to whom He could do according to His will.

Mary and Joseph, mother and foster-father, furnished God incarnate with the tools that made the world a better place. They made Him the Man He became. Their home, humble and poor as it was, was a powerhouse of virtue, labour and love - a single family who changed the world.

Blessed is the child who is born of good parents. Blessed are the children who grow up in a family environment that is ordered and focused around the virtues of dedication and service. Such families resemble the Holy Family, and furnish their offspring with the virtues God needs to use them to further His designs here below. God needs skilled labourers in the art of love and the gift of self. For these alone are able to turn our selfish world into one of justice and mercy. †

NOTE TO PARISHIONERS

Dear parishioners,

A note to thank you all for your patience and good will in navigating the different Mass times and schedules each Sunday, and for submitting to the annoying need of booking spaces at inconvenient times.

Unfortunately, the present state of affairs does not look like it is going away anytime soon. Although we are able to have Mass, we all miss the cheerfulness and warmth of after-Mass gatherings.

We are doing our best to provide as many opportunities for undisturbed access to the sacraments. Between school and parish needs, we can only take each day as it comes. Keeping up is a real challenge!

Thank you to the chapel cleaners and flower makers. Many busy hands work to keep the chapel fresh and tidy.

THANK YOU!

ANOTHER NOTE TO THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

THE COMMUNITY IS VERY GRATEFUL.

We hope that, despite your generosity, we will be able to remain in good health in 2021. The whisky will help.

Please be assured of our daily prayers for your intentions.

MARRIAGE BANNS

MR SCOTT BIRSS of Stanford, California, USA & **MISS BERNADETTE SMITH** of Headley, Hants

Plan to be married on 1st May 2021

Any persons knowing of any impediment to this union are obliged, under conscience, to notify a priest as soon as possible.

Liturgical Calendar and Mass Times - January

1	Circumcision of Our Lord - Octave of Christmas <i>Holy Hour 11:00</i>	7:30/9:00/12:00
2	Feria in Christmastide 1st Sat.	7:30/12:00
3	The Most Holy Name of Jesus <i>2nd Collection for District Seminary Fund</i>	6:30, 7:30 9:00, 17:00 18:00 Benediction
4	Feria in Christmastide	7:15
5	Feria in Christmastide	7:15
6	Feast of the Epiphany	6:30/7:30/9:00/19:00
7	Feria after Epiphany	7:15
8	Feria after Epiphany	7:15
9	Saturday of Our Lady	7:30/12:00
10	The Holy Family	6:30, 7:30 9:00, 17:00 18:00 Benediction
11	Feria of 1st Sunday after Epiphany	7:15
12	Feria of 1st Sunday after Epiphany	7:15
13	Commemoration of the Baptism of the Lord	7:15
14	St. Hilary, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
15	St. Paul, the First Hermit, Confessor	7:15
16	St. Marcellus I, Pope & Martyr	7:30/12:00
17	Second Sunday After Epiphany	6:30, 7:30 9:00, 17:00 18:00 Benediction
18	Feria	7:15
19	Feria	7:15
20	Ss Fabian, Pope, and Sebastian, Martyrs	7:15
21	St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr	7:15
22	Ss Vincent & Anastasius, Martyrs	7:15
23	St. Raymond of Peñafort, Confessor	7:30/12:00
24	Third Sunday after Epiphany	6:30, 7:30 9:00, 17:00 18:00 Benediction
25	Conversion of St. Paul	7:15
26	St. Polycarp, Bishop & Martyr	7:15
27	St. John Chrysostom, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
28	St. Peter Nolasco, Confessor	7:15
29	St. Francis de Sales, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
30	St. Martina, Virgin & Martyr	7:30/12:00
31	Septuagesima Sunday	6:30, 7:30 9:00, 17:00 18:00 Benediction

MASS ATTENDANCE REMAINS REGULATED.

Please use the noticeboard booking system to ensure that everyone is spread out across all the Masses. Please also observe as best possible the hygiene requirements of these strange times, out of respect for others.

<https://noticeboard.sanctusmichael.com/stmichaels/>