

Second Sunday of Advent, 8th December 2019

“Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.”

Some would see the division we have described as being the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the picture of God is that of an angry judge, in the New Testament the picture is that of a loving saviour. Our readings today undermine the simplicity of such a view. In our reading from Isaiah, we are offered a vision of peace, even among those who are naturally enemies. The concern of the awaited saviour will be to put right injustices and give a voice to people who are poor and wretched.

In our Gospel reading, one would feel John the Baptist would be perfectly at home in one of those old-style parish missions. As he prepares the way for the Lord, he launches into a full-blooded attack on the powers that be, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It is interesting that John does not specify the failings of his antagonists. He highlights their assumption that they are in the right through being children of Abraham, and he suggests that they are not producing good fruit. The image he chooses is that of a farmer separating wheat from the chaff with his winnowing fan, not an image we can perhaps conjure up easily today but an everyday sight at that time, and an activity that demanded energy and vigour. The one who is to come will be challenging and forceful too.

*Also, the words of John the Baptist could be described in these phrases: **“It is too late to close the gate once the horse has bolted; to put on a parachute after jumping; or to fasten a seatbelt after an accident. Regrettably, they are missed opportunities to have done the right thing at the right time. It is also too late to ‘share’ the Gospel after someone has died. During our lifetime we have a golden opportunity to relay the ‘Greatest News of All’ (John 3: 16) to loved ones and neighbours. However, this is not an eternal opportunity. Without warning, they or we could be gone. We should do everything we can to ensure we don’t ‘eternally’ regret missing the golden opportunities available to us NOW. (Colossians 4: 3-6)”***

Any attempt to resolve this conundrum begins with Jesus himself. He chooses to be the victim of violence rather than invoke his mighty powers to bring home the truth of his message. By doing this he reveals the nature of God. At the same time, he is in no way irresolute in confronting his enemies. He is clear in his condemnation of the self-righteous and those who use their positions of power to lord it over others. He also seems to have become fairly exasperated by the obtuseness of his disciples at times, in their case referring more sadly to their lack of faith and their likely weakness under attack.

His main concern is to find a way of communicating that gets through to his listeners. Hence his frequent use of parables, which tell stories, sometimes violent, sometimes even immoral, with a sting in their tail. He is in pursuit of that change of heart, the repentance first preached by John the Baptist but also at the centre of his Gospel message. All of these elements seen in Jesus offer us

a way forward, both in our self-analysis and also in the way we too try to communicate and live out his Gospel.

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Welcome to Mgr Jim Overton who is covering the Masses this weekend.

Monthly teas and coffees after 9.15am Mass this Sunday, 8th December.

Crib. I would like to thank Joe Mascarenhas, Dominic DSousa and Victor Pinto for putting up the Crib.

Christmas Carols ‘Sing-a-long’. The Parish Council would like to invite you and your families to a Christmas Carols ‘Sing-a-long’ evening in the parish hall on **Friday 13th December at 7.00pm**. Wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be available (donations welcome).

Mass of Anointing. There will be a Mass of Anointing for those who are sick on **Saturday 14th December at 10.15am** (*Please note no 9.15am Mass or Adoration*).

Family Carol Service and Tableaux. Our Family Carol Service is next **Sunday 15th December at 3.00pm** followed by mince pies, mulled wine and tea or coffee in the Parish Hall. It is always a very lovely Service and so it would be good to see many of you there.

The God who Speaks – Lee Gibson, Parish Catechist, has prepared a handout reflecting on the readings for the 2nd Sunday of Advent. Please do take a copy from the narthex.

Confirmation 2020. Applications Forms are now available and should be made online ONLY. Please go to <https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford/> to download and return the application form by **5th January 2020** to **ashfordconf@rcdow.org.uk** (do NOT send to ashford@rcdow.org.uk). On the parish website you will need to select Sacramental Preparation and then select Confirmation. The date of the Confirmation is Saturday 27th June at 2:30pm and will be conferred by the Episcopal Vicar Canon Paschal Ryan.

Solemn Adoration and Benediction takes place after 9.15am Mass on Saturdays.

Fr Sidon Sagar FDP

Dates for your diary in December

Sunday, 8th	Monthly teas and coffees after 9.15am Mass
Friday 13th	Christmas Carols ‘Sing a Long’ 7.00pm in the parish hall
Saturday 14th	Mass for the Anointing of the Sick, 10.15am
Sunday 15th	Family Carol Service with Tableaux 3.00pm
Tuesday 24th	Mass at 9.15am <i>First Mass of Christmas</i> 6.00pm <i>Midnight Mass</i> 11.00 with Carols 10.30pm
Wednesday 25th	Christmas Masses 9.15am and 11.00am (no evening Mass)
Thursday 26th	Mass at 10.00am

Offertory Collection. Last week's collection was £1,872.56 - Envelopes £696.13; Bankers Orders £600.00 (weekly average); Loose Plate £576.43

The Bucket Collection in December is for Crisis at Christmas.

Repository. Christmas cards, gifts, calendars, Year Books and diaries are on sale in the Repository.

Ladies Circle. Our last meeting for the year is on Thursday 12th December at 8.00pm in the parish hall - *please bring your Secret Santa gift.*

St Michael's News, our parish quarterly magazine. If you would like to contribute an article to the Christmas edition, please forward to juliangame@aol.com or leave at the presbytery.

Free Christmas lunch for local pensioners. The Ash Tree public house is inviting 25 local pensioners to a free Christmas lunch on **Tuesday 10th December 2019** 1.00pm for 1.30 start. The lunch will start with a free drink on arrival followed by lunch.

Please fill in your name and food choice on the sheet in the narthex.

If you need further information, please call Moya Hogan on 07791 641456.

Donate your old frames and stamps and help make a change. *Specsavers in Staines* collect old, unwanted glasses so they can be used to improve the eye health of those less fortunate in the developing world; and the *Spelthorne Mental Association* shop in Ashford collects used stamps.

St Ignatius Catholic Primary School, Sunbury is looking for a Special Needs Teaching Assistant to be a one to one support to a child. If you are interested, please see the full advert on their website <https://st-ignatius-catholic-primary-school.secure-primariesite.net/vacancies/>

Readings for 15th December, 3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35: 1-6, 10; James 5: 7-10; Matthew 11: 2-11

PLEASE PRAY

for all the sick and housebound in our parish.

for anniversaries in December since 2012. Marie Bouquet, Anthony Connell, Michael Cowan, Harold Crowley, Elizabeth Daley, Kathleen Day, Marion Field, Michael Horan, Otilia Jenkins, Maureen Malloy, Vincenzo Mingoia, Mary Monahan, Beryl Nicklette, Julie Pichler, Hazel Robinson, John Sheridan, Mary Stevens, Anthony Storer, Mary Stuart, Bernard Ward.

for Fr Nigel Griffin and the parishioners of St Edmund's Whitton in the Upper Thames Deanery.

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that every country determines to take the necessary measures to make the future of the very young, especially those who suffer, a priority.

Emergency Exits: In the event of an emergency, please note that the three fire exits from the church are the main church entrance, the side door to the left of St Joseph's Chapel, and the main entrance to the hall.

Mass Intentions 8th – 15th December

Sunday 8th	Vigil Mass Saturday, 6.00pm	Matilda Saparamadu RIP
	9.15am	Mabel Corry RIP
	11.00am	Maria Alves de Jesus RIP
	6.00pm	The people of the parish
Mon 9th	9.15am	Thomas Stevenson RIP
Tues 10th	9.15am	Elva Gonzalvas RIP
Wed 11th	9.15am	Wesley Fernandes RIP
Fri 13th	9.15am	Catherine Mead RIP
Sat 14th	10.15am	Agostinho Barretto RIP
Sunday 15th	Vigil Mass Saturday, 6.00pm	Melvin Silva RIP
	9.15am	Michael Bentley RIP
	11.00am	Agostinho & Francisca Barretto RIP; Raienda & Paulo Furtado RIP
	6.00pm	The people of the parish

Sunday Mass

(Vigil) Saturday, 6.00pm

9.15am Family (Folk Group, Children's Liturgy of the Word)

11.00am Sung (First Sunday, Ordinary of the Mass sung in Latin)
6.00pm

Holy Days of Obligation Mass

9.15am and 7.00pm

Weekday Mass

9.15am Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday

Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction

Saturday 9.45 – 10.15am

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday 10.15 – 10.45am (and at any time by appointment)

Sacrament of Baptism

Normally celebrated on a Saturday once a month. To arrange a Baptism contact
Baptism Catechist Lee Gibson on 07713 760281 or lee.gibson.2na@btinternet.com

St Michael's Catholic Church

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Website: <http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford>

This parish is part of the Westminster Catholic Diocese Trustee Charity no. 233699

Parish Priest: Fr Sidon Sagar FDP; Assistant Priest: Fr Carlo Mazzotta FDP

Parish Secretary: Mrs Shenda Holmes

Parish Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 10.00am - 1.00pm
