

Third Sunday of Advent, 15 December 2024

“And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?”

At various times throughout our lives, we will put ourselves through experiences which could be classed as unpleasant or even painful.

From Weight Watchers to Slimming World, we stop eating fattening foods, cut down on the quantities we take, and even start eating foods that we might otherwise consider distasteful. From examinations to driving tests, these involve weeks of hard study, sleepless nights, and long hours of practice, all in the hope of remembering and, on the day, practising what has been learnt. Diets and examinations are but samples of the many unpleasant or painful experiences which we inflict on ourselves throughout our lives. The question is — Why? Why do we diet, why do we take exams, why do we do anything that causes pain or is unpleasant? The reason is, of course, so that we can eventually rejoice in the fact that we are slim and healthy or knowledgeable and qualified. We rejoice because we have achieved our aim; we have completed the process; we have attained our goal.

In the Old Testament times, there were many prophets in the generations preceding the birth of Jesus. These men predicted the future, often centred around the coming of a saviour. Many of the prophets described how people would feel and how they would react when this event took place. In the first reading from the prophet Zephaniah, we find an example of this prophecy. Zephaniah foresees a day of great rejoicing when people will rejoice with all their heart. However, people everywhere on earth, at the instant of the Saviour's birth — the day of rejoicing — didn't begin a festival of dancing and song. People who were unhappy, sick, or poor didn't start dancing and shouting aloud.

The people of Israel went through a painful process. Just as the healthy body and the qualification only appear after undergoing the ordeal of a diet or an examination, so, with the time of joy, the time of the Saviour, the time of Jesus. A painful experience was necessary before the people could rejoice.

In the Gospel, we find that another prophet is not only foretelling the great day of rejoicing but also describing the process which must be undertaken before the day of rejoicing can take place. John the Baptist calls the people to change heart. He tells them that they must put right their wrongs so that those who are sad through poverty, injustice or persecution may also be able to rejoice. It is this change of heart: the rectifying of wrongs, poverty, injustice and persecution which is the painful process, the challenge which is given by John the Baptist. This is the process which will enable all to rejoice, not just the rich and powerful but also the poor, the deprived and the persecuted.

Today, the third Sunday of Advent is given the title “gaudate”, a Latin word which means “rejoice”. On this Sunday everyone is called to renew this process which enables everyone to rejoice, to be joyous. **Today we recall and renew this process of preparation and in so doing we are renewing our commitment to the Christian life; a life which calls us to make hard decisions, decisions which can be painful. Throughout these final days before Christmas, therefore, let us remember that in our Christian lives this Advent, we are called to bring joy to those around us and especially to those for whom life is filled with sadness and pain.**

Christmas Mass Times:

Christmas Eve, Tuesday 24th December

First Mass of Christmas 06.30pm, with Carols at 6.00pm
Midnight Mass 11.00pm, with Carols at 10.30pm

Christmas Day, Wednesday 25th December

Masses at 09.15am and 11.30am.

St Stephen's Day, Thursday 26th December

Mass at 09.15am

New Year's Day, Wednesday 1st January 2025

Mass at 10.00am

Mary Docherty RIP. The Funeral will take place on **Friday 20th December** at 11.00am.

Ellen Patricia (Pat) McNulty RIP. The Funeral will take place on **Tuesday 7th January 2025** at 11.30am.

Beatrice Mousinho RIP died on 10th December. Please pray for the repose of her soul.
Funeral details to follow.

Christmas Tree and Crib. We extend our deepest gratitude to **Clodagh John** for putting up our *beautiful Christmas Tree* every year and to **Simon and Bertie** for helping. A heartfelt thank you to **Joe Teixeira, Gary Moore, Shane Landersz** and his daughters, **Lidia and Kornelia**, and the SOL Choir members - **Victor, Melba, Bernard, Millisha** (with her son **Daschel**), and **Kirsten** our youngster for their dedication in setting up the crib this year. We are also immensely grateful to all those who came to the church to help last Friday and Saturday. Your efforts have truly brought the spirit of Christmas to life in our parish. As we reflect on this season of giving and community, let us remember the words of **Matthew 5:16**: "*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*" **Thank you for being the light in our community.**

Christmas Bake-off. Thank you to all those who supported the Bake-Off last Sunday. A special thanks to Donna Buckley for organising the event and to her helpers Katy White, Tania Coutinho and Sam Finn. £70.00 was raised.

Crib. Do visit the Crib in **St Joseph's Chapel**. Your donations are for the Catholic Children's Society.

Christmas Flowers. If you would like to donate towards the cost of the Christmas Flowers for the church, please place your donation in an envelope and hand it to the offertory collectors at weekend Masses or post through the Presbytery letterbox. *Thank you.*

Caritas Vouchers and Assistance Scheme. This parish is part of the scheme run by Caritas Westminster. If you, or anyone you know, needs support please contact Lee Gibson, Caritas Representative, on 07713 760281 or lee.gibson.2na@bfineternet.com. All requests she receives will be dealt with confidentially

The Joy of Christmas parish event. If you would like a refund for your tickets, please get in touch with Shenda in the parish office on 01784 252230 or ashford@rcdow.org.uk

Christmas Gifts. The Year 4 children at St Michael's School have been learning about the Catholic Social Teaching Principle, '*Option for the Poor*' - that we should think first about the needs of the most vulnerable. To put this into action, the children have donated everyday items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, cleansing wipes etc. and even some small toys and books. The small gift bags are in the narthex - please take a bag if you or someone you know may need these items over the Christmas holidays.

Mass Intentions. If you wish to book a Mass, please drop your intention envelope in the box at the back of the church in the offertory collection or through the presbytery letterbox. *Please use the new blue donation envelopes if you can make your Mass offering under Gift Aid.*

Bucket Collection. The Bucket Collection is for **Crisis at Christmas**. You will find the donations box in the wall at the back of the church.

St Vincent de Paul. The SVP are distributing over 10,000 homeless packs (Vinnie Packs) during the extreme cold weather.. Please could you consider sponsoring packs at a suggested donation of £4.10 per pack? Donations can be sent to **Vinnie Packs, PO Box 72264, London SW1P 9EZ** with cheques made out to SVP or by bank transfer to Nat West sort code **60-60-04, account no. 4608 8237** . Thank you so much for your support."

This Sunday's readings, 15 December, Third Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3: 14-18; Phillipians 4: 4-7; Luke 3 ; 10-18

Next Sunday's readings, 22 December, Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5: 1-4; Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1: 39-45

Offertory Collection. Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate **£525.29**; Envelopes **£244.00**; Standing Orders £900.00

Contactless £207.00 (*The Dona contactless PayPoint is in the narthex*)

The Sons of Divine Providence: £197.42 – Thank you for your generosity

MANNA Foodbank. This week's shortages: *Tinned Cold Meat - especially chicken; Cream Crackers/Cheese Biscuits; Small Jars of Coffee; Tea Bags in 40's (we have good stocks of other sizes); Packets of Nuts & Raisins; Marmalade; Sweetener; Men's 2 in 1 Shower Gel/Shampoo; Deodorant for Women; Shaving Foam/Gel; Kitchen Roll - preferably smaller rolls; Toilet Paper.*

Please leave your donations on the Presbytery doorstep or in the Narthex.

Safeguarding If you've any concerns or require advice regarding the safety or well-being of a child or vulnerable adult, please contact our parish safeguarding rep, Tiziana Demurtas on 07778 533932 or ashfordsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

You can also contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 020 7798 9356 or safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

During Adoration after Saturday morning Mass (and by appointment)

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

To arrange a baptism please refer to the parish website:

(see: Parish Life → Sacramental Preparation → Baptism

For the parish Mass timetable, please refer to the parish website:

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

PLEASE PRAY

for all the sick and housebound in our parish.

for anniversaries in December since 2017: Angela Bentley, Marie Bouquet, Gavin Boyle, Anne Brown, Anthony Connell, Ronald Connor, Michael Cowan, Philip Eveleigh, Mary Gartlan, Thomas Harrington, Maurice Hunter, Michael Igoe, Vincenzo Mingoia, Mary Monahan, Margaret Murphy, Beryl Nicklette, Hazel Robinson, Cecilia Roughan, Marion Seal, Monica Stevens.

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

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that the coming Church Jubilee Year 2025 strengthens us in our faith, helping us to recognise the Risen Christ in the midst of our lives, transforming us into pilgrims of Christian hope.

Mass Intentions 15th – 22nd December

Sun 15th **Third Sunday of Advent**

(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm	Maurice Rodrigues RIP
	09.15am	The people of the parish
	11.30am	Rita B Fernandes RIP
	06.00pm	Brian Savage RIP
Mon 16 th	09.15am	Maria Ong Kwee Hwai RIP
Tues 17 th	09.15am	Celio Rodrigues & Lizanne Fernandes – Wedding Anniversary
Wed 18 th	06.00pm	Joachim Ng RIP
Fri 20 th	09.15am	John Ong Kwee Teck RIP
	11.00am	Funeral of MARY DOCHERTY RIP
Sat 21 st	09.15am	Germano Fernandes RIP

Sun 22nd **Fourth Sunday of Advent**

(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm	Melvin Silva RIP
	09.15am	Mary Gartlan RIP
	11.30am	In thanksgiving – Candice Mendonca & family
	06.00pm	The people of the parish

St Michael's Catholic Church

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

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

Parish Secretary: Mrs Shenda Holmes

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm