

## **Second Sunday of Advent, 8 December 2024**

***“A voice cries in the wilderness; prepare a way for the Lord.”***

**We may not have thought it but most of us use the word joy very carefully. Its synonyms such as happiness or gladness come more readily to our lips. We may be delighted or over the moon or alternatively devastated or sick as a parrot, but we do tend to reserve the word joy and its compounds for more special descriptions. It is perhaps not true of other languages. The French wish each other a “Joyeux Noel” if usually only in its written form. But the English-speaking use of the word is more restrained. It is as though we use it to express something deeper and less transitory than happiness or gladness. We can use it to express a state of mind brought about by our own achievements, but they must be special, such as giving birth or an unexpected but delightful meeting with those we love. More usually we reserve its use for occasions when we want to express being in touch with something that is greater than ourselves. This can be a religious experience but also our reaction to encounters with nature, the arts or music, or those special moments of being with others. Hymns and poetry are the natural milieux for its use. “Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising” we sing, or “This joyful Eastertide, away with sin and sorrow.” It has its natural companions too, namely gratitude and a sense of deep serenity or peace. We recognise it as a gift that is ultimately beyond our understanding, a blessed gift we pray we may be always open to receiving and may relish when it is bestowed.**

St Paul's address to the Philippians immediately picks up on the theme of joy. He says that whenever he prays for his listeners he prays with joy because he remembers how open they have been to the message he preached to them and how eager they have been to spread the Good News. His prayer for them now is that their love for each other may increase more and more so that they will eventually reach the stage of perfect goodness. In both the Gospel and the first reading the image of this new state of joy is conveyed through the image of the flattening of the mountains and the filling in of the valleys. For nature lovers, this might not sound like the best of ideas, but for those struggling to make a living in rugged terrain, it is an image of resolving their struggles to make a living. St Pius IX had the text from Isaiah engraved on the first papal railway coach, as he envisaged the arrival of the railway as a symbol of such a time coming into being. Unfortunately, this was followed quickly by a time of revolution throughout Europe, and he changed his mind about the modern world and its attributes. St John, in preparing the way for the coming of Jesus, proclaims that nothing can stand in his way. His powerful presence can overcome all obstacles.

The American Constitution speaks of the right to happiness. It has proved to be a siren song for many. It is the nature of happiness or joy that they do not conform to the language of rights. Happiness is transitory, and even joy as a deeper response to life is not a human right. It is a response to being open to what life brings when that life also includes the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. For Christians is it ultimately allowing ourselves to be seduced by God, what Christian writers have termed being “surprised by joy”. For St Paul, it happens through the pursuit of goodness. As we grow in our love for each other and our love for our world we find joy creeping into our lives, at first unawares and then gradually becoming the bedrock of our existence. It is true that some people seem to have a more natural talent for this pursuit than others. They automatically take choices for the good that others haven't even recognised as a choice. If we are not so naturally inclined, how do we cultivate an openness to joy? It is partly a matter of getting rid of the attitudes that block such openness, for example being judgmental, negatively inclined, a moaner. The more positive side is exploring what in life we find enlightening and uplifting, the moments we

have been touched by joy and how we might increase our openness to such moments in the here and now.

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**Annual Collection for the Sons of Divine Providence.** There will be a retiring collection after all Masses this weekend, 7<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> December.

**Monthly Coffees in the parish hall after Sunday 9.15 am Mass this Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December.**

From January 2025, coffees will be on the first Sunday of the month, rather than on the second Sunday.

**St Michael's Christmas Bake-off.** The Baking Contest will take place in the parish hall after the 9.15 am Mass this **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2024**. Open to all ages.

**Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024.** We will celebrate the Solemnity at the 9.15 am Mass on Monday, transferred from Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December.

**Advent Service of Reconciliation** on **Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 6.00- 7.00 pm** (*please note change of time*) at **St Michael's, Ashford**, and on **Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> December, 6.30-7.30 pm** after the evening Mass at **St David's, Stanwell**.

**The Joy of Christmas, 7<sup>th</sup> December.** Due to a lack of ticket sales, the decision was made to cancel this event. Thank you to those who purchased tickets. If you would like a refund, please get in touch with Shenda in the parish office on 01784 252230 or [ashford@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:ashford@rcdow.org.uk)

**Francis Doherty RIP.** The Funeral will take place on **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December** at 11.00am.

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

**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@btinternet.com](mailto:lee.gibson.2na@btinternet.com). All requests she receives will be dealt with confidentially

**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 donation box in the wall at the back of the church.

**Ladies Circle.** We meet for the last time this year on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December at 8.00pm in the parish hall.

**First Holy Communion 2024.** We still have in the parish office a number of Baptism Certificates that were handed in at Registration for last year's programme. Please collect from Shenda in the parish office at your earliest convenience.

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**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 will be in the narthex from next weekend - please take a bag if you or someone you know may need these items over the Christmas holidays.

**The Divine Mercy Apostolate, London is holding a Divine Mercy Retreat at** All Saints Church 531 Kenton Road Kenton London HA3 0UL. **on Saturday 14 December 2024, 1.00 to 4:30 pm.** The Retreat will include teachings on the Message of Divine Mercy, Holy Mass, Holy Rosary, Hour of Mercy with Adoration and Benediction and Veneration of the Image of Merciful Jesus. For more info call Millie on 07957 594646 . No need to register.

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**This Sunday's readings, 8 December, Second Sunday of Advent**

*Baruch 5: 1-9; Philippians 1: 4-6, 8-11; Luke 3: 1-6*

**Next Sunday's readings, 15 December, Third Sunday of Advent**

*Zephaniah 3: 14-18; Philippians 4: 4-7; Luke 3 : 10-18*

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**Offertory Collection.** Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate £490.71; Envelopes £251.00; Standing Orders £900.00

**Contactless £280.33** (The Dona contactless PayPoint is in the narthex)

**Sick and Retired Priests: £311.00**

**COSMIC: £116.64**

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**MANNA Foodbank.** This week's shortages: Tinned Cold Meat - especially chicken; Cream Crackers/Cheese Biscuits; Small Jars of Coffee; Long-Life Full Fat Milk (Blue); Tinned Soup; Men's 2 in 1 Shower Gel/Shampoo; Deodorant for Women; Laundry Powder/Liquid/Capsules/Tablets; Shaving Foam/Gel; Liquid Soap; Toothpaste and Toothbrushes for 0-2 years; Toothpaste and Toothbrushes for 6+ years; Kitchen Roll - preferably smaller rolls.

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

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**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 at 07778 533932 or ashfordsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

You can also contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 020 7798 9356 or [safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk)

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**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>**

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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.

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### Mass Intentions 8<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> December

Sun 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Second Sunday of Advent</b>	
(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm	Matilda Saparamadu RIP
	09.15am	The people of the parish
	11.30am	Angela Mary Bentley RIP
	06.00pm	Pat and Colin Axtell RIP
Mon 9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</b>	
	09.15am	In thanksgiving to Our Lady
Tues 10 <sup>th</sup>	09.15am	Ann Ashley – good health
Wed 11 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	<b>FUNERAL OF FRANCIS DOHERTY RIP</b>
	06.00pm	Lottie Frances RIP
Fri 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>St Lucy, Virgin and Martyr</b>	
	09.15am	All Souls of the Ng Family
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>St John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church</b>	
	09.15am	Agostinho Barretto RIP
Sun 15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Third Sunday of Advent</b>	
(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

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## St Michael's Catholic Church

112 Clarendon Road, Ashford, Middlesex TW15 2QD

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Email: [ashford@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:ashford@rcdow.org.uk)

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

*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