

# NEWSLETTER

## *John the voice and Christ the Word*

John was a voice, but the Lord in the beginning was the Word. John was a voice for a time, Christ the eternal Word in the Beginning.

Take away the Word and what is a voice? When it conveys no meaning, it is just an empty sound. A wordless voice strikes the ear, but it does not make the heart grow.

However, as we engage in building up our heart, let us pay attention in the order of things. If I think of what I want to say, the word is already in my heart. And if I want to talk to you, I look for some means whereby what is in my heart may also be in yours.

So, wanting the word, which is already in my heart, to come over to you, and make its way into your heart, I make use of my voice to talk to you. The sound of the voice brings you to understand the word. And when my voice has done this, it ceases; but the word carried to you by the sound is now already in your heart, and has not left mine.

Take this sound then. After the word has passed into your possession, does not seem to say, 'He must increase, but I must decrease'? the sound of the voice cried out, performing its service, and then passed away, as though it said, 'This joy of mine is now full'. Let us hold on to the word, and not let slip the word we have inwardly conceived.

Do you want to see a transient voice, and the abiding divinity of the Word? Where is John's baptism now? He served his purpose and left. It is Christ's baptism which is now administered. We all believe in Christ, and hope for salvation in him. This precisely what the voice told us.

Since it is difficult to distinguish the voice and the word, John himself was thought to be Christ. The voice was taken to be the Word. But the voice admitted his identity, lest he might displease the Word. 'I am not the Christ', he said, 'not Elijah, not the prophet'. In reply to, 'Who are you?' he said, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; Prepare the way of the Lord'. 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness', the voice of one breaking the silence. 'Prepare the way of the Lord', is as though he said: I cry out to lead him into your heart-but he will not condescend to come where I am leading, unless you prepare the way.

What does 'to prepare the way' mean, except to pray as you ought, to be humble minded? Take an example of humility from John himself. He is thought to be Christ, but he says he is not what people think He does not use the mistake of others to feed his own pride.

Suppose he had said: I am the Christ. How easily would he have been believed, since that was what people were thinking before he spoke? But he did not say it. He acknowledged who he was, distinguished himself from Christ, humbled himself.

He knew where his salvation lay. He understood that he was a lamp, and he was afraid of being quenched by the word of pride.

*St. Augustine*



## Third Sunday of Advent

### MASS INTENTIONS

#### December 16th, 2023

6pm - Pro Populo

#### December 17th, 2023

9am— Ints of Holy Father

11 am - Ints of

Sherry Siganporia

#### Tue - 19th December

9.15 am - Holy Souls

#### Friday - 22nd December

9.15 am - Holy Souls

Confession on Saturday between  
5.15-5.45 pm  
or by appointment.



As we are approaching Christmas Season, I want to wish you & your families, a blessed Christmas and prosperous New Year. Have a safe journey wherever you go and have a safe journey back.

This is the last Newsletter this year. Thank you all for what you have done for our Church, Parish and community and for being with us.

*Fr Christopher*



### A Prayer after Communion

Grant O Lord, we pray, that, benefiting from participation in heavenly things.

We may be helped by what you give in this present age and prepared for the gifts that are eternal. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Readings for this & next Sunday

1st Reading—  
Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11  
Psalm Luke 1;46-50, 53-54  
Response Isaiah 61: 10  
2nd Reading -  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
Gospel – John 1; 6-8, 19-28

1st Reading— 2 Samuel 7;  
1-5, 8-12, 14-16  
Psalm 88: 2-5, 27, 29 Resp v 2  
2nd Reading -  
Romans 16:25-27,  
Gospel – Luke 1; 26-38

### *On the Season of Advent*

The present season is one of particular importance. It is a sacred season. As the Holy Spirit says, it is the time of the Lord's favour, the day of salvation, peace and reconciliation. The patriarchs and prophets longed and prayed and yearned with all their hearts for this time. That just man Simeon at long last saw this time and his joy was boundless. And the Church has always kept the season in a special way. So, we too must continue to celebrate it fittingly, giving praise and thanks to the eternal Father for the mercy he has shown in the mystery of the coming of his Only-begotten Son.

The Father sent his Son out of his immeasurable love for us sinners. He sent him to free us from the tyrannical power of the devil, to invite us to heaven and lead us into its innermost sanctuary. He was sent to show us truth itself, to teach us how we should live, to share with us the source of all goodness, to enrich us with the treasures of his grace. Finally, he was sent to make us sons of the Father and heirs to eternal life.

The Church calls this mystery to mind each year to stir us to renew constantly our memory of the great love God has shown us. This commemoration teaches us that our Saviour came not only for the benefit of the people of his own time. His goodness is still there for us to share in. But, for our part, through faith and the sacraments we must lay hold on the grace he won for us and live by it in obedience to him.

The Church warns us to understand that as he came once into the world in the flesh, so now, if we remove all barriers, he is ready to come to us again at any minute or hour, to make his home spiritually within us in all his grace.

Like a devoted mother, keenly concerned for our salvation, the Church uses the rites of this season, in hymns, songs and other utterances of the Holy Spirit to teach us a lesson. She shows us how to receive this great gift of God with thankfulness and how to be enriched by its possession. She teaches us that our hearts should be as prepared now for the coming of Christ our Lord as if he were still to come into the world. The Fathers also have taught us the same lesson, giving us words and example from the Old Testament to imitate.

*St. Charles Borromeo*

### **CHRISTMAS TIMETABLE**

**Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2023 – 7pm Parish Community Christmas Carols**

**Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Masses at 6pm, Saturday & 11am Sunday

**Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Christmas Eve**

6.00pm

Children's Mass for Christmas

11.30 pm

Midnight Mass of Christmas with Carols before

**Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Christmas Day**

11am

Mass of Christmas Day

**Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**St Stephen -**

Mass at 11am

**27<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

No Mass

**28<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

No Mass

**29<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

No Mass

**Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup>**

**The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**

Masses at 6pm, Saturday 11am Sunday

**Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024**

**The Holy Mother of God**

- Mass at 11am

**2nd, 3rd, 4th January 2024**

No Mass

**5<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

9.15 am Masss

**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**The Epiphany of the Lord**

Masses at 6pm, Saturday & 9am & 11am Sunday



My first Christmas in Kisumu town, Kenya, is fixed in my memory even though it was 42 years ago (one of the most unsettling aspects of growing older is that memories half a century ago seem like yesterday, while what happened last week can sometimes be hazy and/or confused). Before I proceed with my story, I need to mention that it was seriously hot that year, with temperatures rising well into the thirties. I remember being simply homesick, for as I have often mentioned, though the welcome from the people of Kisumu parish was overwhelming, those deeply ingrained Christmas expectations came flooding back.

**Christmas in Kisumu.** When we are homesick, we tend to cling to the trappings of our own home culture in order to connect with, well, home. My first thought was a tree. 'If only I could have a Christmas tree in the parish house,' I naively thought, 'that would do it for me.'

After some discreet enquiries, a kind soul cut a branch from a tree that looked something like a Christmas tree. I put it in a large pot. Someone else gave me some homemade decorations, and I put cotton wool on the branches, endlessly explaining to bewildered visitors that this was snow, not fruit. This was the last time I attempted this exercise in Kisumu! Christmas Day came. We had Masses on the hour, every hour, from 6am until midday. The cathedral was packed at every Mass and by 1pm several thousand people had come to celebrate the joyful message of Christmas, that God-is-with-us in the person of Jesus Christ until the end of time. However, what I really remember is a funeral Mass I was asked to celebrate on Boxing Day. A young mother and child had died, both taken by tetanus after a birth at home.

The sight of two coffins, one large, one small, one on top of the other accompanied by a distraught, grieving family was stark contrast to the joy of the previous day. That image has stayed with me to this day.

**The difficulty of joy.** There is a multitude of people across our world who 'under every grief and pine' will find it hard to find joy at this time. The people of Gaza, including several hundred Christians sheltering in the two churches there, will find it very difficult to be joyful. Gaza – through which, as tradition has it, the Holy Family travel on their way to Egypt to escape persecution. The families of those murdered or taken as hostages by the Hamas terrorist organisation will not be able to find anything to celebrate. People driven out of Myanmar into a refugee camp in northern Thailand, which I visited recently, will celebrate Christmas again, hoping that someone will hear their cries for a home somewhere in the world. And there will be some of us reading this who will struggle to find joy in this season because of memories of loss and current travail. **I am now inclined to believe that HOPE is a much better word to describe the meaning of Christmas, and perhaps of the whole Christmas message.**

**The power of love.** The power of God's love for us all is unstoppable. God stands with all of us in our joys and in our sufferings, in our doubts, in our fears, and with our regrets, and even with those who reject him.

As missionary disciples we are called to stand with those who are the victims of injustice, violence, poverty, oppression, and all manner of evil. We stand with them to give them hope, not some vain wish, but the words of life – now and for eternity. **By being part of the Missio family – through your prayers, donations, and engagement – you too can stand in solidarity with those who truly need this message of hope. Hope rooted in the birth, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's Son.**

Speaking to young people on World Youth Day this year, the Holy Father summed it all up in the following words: '*Christian hope is no facile optimism, no placebo for the credulous. It is the certainty, rooted in love and faith, that God never abandons us and remains faithful to his promise: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me."*'

***I wish you a happy and hope-filled celebration of Christmas. By the grace of God and our untiring efforts, may 2024 bring us peace with justice throughout the world.***

Fr Anthony Chantry, Missio National Director, England & Wales

## Be Generous

May the coming week be filled with love and service.

In place of our selfish instinct to hoard, Jesus tells us to be generous instead of focusing on our own needs, to care for others; to replace a culture of having with a culture of giving.

It doesn't matter whether we can give a little or a lot. What counts is 'how' we give, how much love we put into even a small gesture of kindness for another person.

*Chiara Lubich*

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**Fr Christopher Silva**

*Parish Priest,*

**Mrs Katherine Woznicka**

*Parish Administrator*

**The office may be contacted by phone:**

**Monday to Friday 9am-2pm**

**Closed on Bank Holidays**

**Mrs Diane Winship** - Safeguarding Representative

**Mr John Chesson** - Data Protection Parish Officer

**LAST WEEK'S COLLECTIONS:**

loose: £292.90 envelopes: £232. contactless collection last weekend: £235.00      total: **£759.90**

Standing orders in **February - £5706; , in March - £3820, in April £4002, in May - £2533, in June - 3545, in July - 2758, in August - 5713, in September- 2832, in October- 2805, in November- 2588,**

As a charity we rely on your donations only. As you have not been allowed to come to the church , we only were receiving donations set up as standing orders. We will be grateful for your financial support when you are back.

Your new sets of gift aided envelopes are available for collection before/after any mass or from the office.

Alternatively you could send your donation by bank. Parish account is on Parish Web.

***Thank you for your Generosity***

WRCDT Charity No: 233699

**RICHARD HOUSE - London's first children's hospice**

Richard House is a children's hospice based in the heart of Newham that has been providing specialised free care services to seriously ill children and their families across East London communities for over 22 years. We are now supporting over 300 families and are asking you to consider supporting Richard House.

Many parents of seriously ill children are unable to work due to complex medical conditions of their children, requiring 24/7 care. We offer free specialised care to these families and hope you can help us to continue to fulfil our mission. We get limited support from local authorities, with three quarters' of the money we need is coming from fundraising alone.

More information you can find on our website at [www.richardhouse.org.uk](http://www.richardhouse.org.uk)

We hope you will consider supporting Richard House at this time!

Your sincerely, *Charlie Grey*, Community Fundraiser, [charlieg@richardhouse.org.uk](mailto:charlieg@richardhouse.org.uk)

**A prayer for the souls in purgatory**

Lord I come before You with a spirit dedicated to love and service, echoing the themes that govern our lives and the souls we remember in purgatory. In the silence of my heart, I hold the holy souls dearly, offering my days actions for their spiritual comfort. May the compassion that you have planted within us flourish as we remember those on their purifying journey.

Today, let me be a vessel of your mercy, sharing with others the kindness that can bridge the gap between earth and eternity. Let my deeds reflect the sanctity of service that supports the souls entrusted to Your care.

With every breadth, I yearn to embody the virtues that draw us closer to You, Lord. May the love I share alleviate the burdens of those who have passed and light their path to Your divine presence.

This month of remembrance deepens our connection to the communion of saints and the faithful departed. I commit to walking with a heart full of hope, extending my prayers as a beacon of light for the souls still journeying home.

Grant, O Lord, that my intentions and actions today may resonate with the eternal harmony of Your divine plan. May they bring peace to the souls in purgatory, as we all strive to embrace the joy of Your salvation.

In Your mercy hear this prayer, and may the souls of all the faithful departed, through Your boundless love, find rest and everlasting joy. Amen