Fr Peter writes......

Last week whilst preparing for a simple dramatization of the Nativity of Jesus I was struck by the intersection between human history and divine history that sets the context for the birth of Jesus. It was only when one actor read out the decree, to be followed by another in Nazareth that the unintended implications of Caesar Augustus’ action became clear. The dispersal of the children, after the decree had been read indicated the mass movement of peoples that must have taken place in towns like Nazareth where, one may presume, many had migrated to find work. Joseph is described as a workman in the Gospels, and some scholars have thought that he might have worked on the building of Sepphoris, a new Roman town, a few miles from Nazareth. The manner of the birth of Jesus is experienced by migrants throughout the world, but the seemingly random events of human history become the vehicle for God’s unfolding plan for humanity. Though in terms of history it looks as if Caesar Augustus was dictating the course of events, it was God using these circumstances to create the conditions whereby the prophecies of the Old Testament would be fulfilled, namely that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

The journey to Bethlehem was long and the reception unwelcome. Though Bethlehem is only a few miles from Jerusalem it was, and certainly now is, with the separation wall between Israel and the West Bank, another world. Jesus was born on the margins of civilised life, even of a small village like Bethlehem. How should the circumstance be understood? The location in a stable or cave, raises a question mark on the nature of human society by identifying its shadow, those parts of which one is troubled but find difficult to place into words. No human society is perfect and every society needs the measure of the Gospel. The location of the birth also demonstrates that no-one is potentially excluded from the spiritual embrace of this child. The birth of Jesus is unalloyed good news.

The shepherds, is the first recipients of the Good News demonstrate that the message has universal appeal. Later Jesus will describe Himself as the Good Shepherd, and He will seek shepherds to gather the lost sheep of the people of Israel. They were privileged to encounter the angel with his message about the birth of a Saviour but they will become the first messengers of the Good News to the town.

Their message will be that of the angels ‘Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of good will’. The birth of Jesus is the work of God, the God who is the foundation of all that exists. He is glorious, but His glory does not stand alone in isolation but is orientated towards the heart of His creation, the people of the world. Though the Christmas message possesses the power of God it is not imposed, it is offered, to be freely taken up by men and women of good will. Who are these men and women? They are neither the divinely selected group of those already predestined to hear the message, nor a humanly constituted group of those fashionably good enough to hear. The intended audience are all those to whom the message of peace will change their lives in some way.

The acceptance of the gift of peace distinguishes the Christmas of faith from the Christmas of myth. The Christmas of faith does not deprecate the Christmas of myth; the midwinter festival, the gathering together of families, the sharing of presents. These activities should always be enjoyed as manifestations of the peace and love of which people are capable, but the Christmas of faith can grasp that the circumstances of the birth are a foretaste of Jesus’ public life. As Jesus tells the Apostles, the ‘Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head’, and He will eventually die on the margins, outside the city gate on Golgotha.

The gift of peace that sits within every human heart is freely given at Christmas, and that is the beauty of the Festival. It is something to treasure but for the gift of divine peace to possess lasting effect the believer should become an instrument of peace himself or herself. The invitation is to become the shepherds, both listening to the message, taking it to heart, and telling others of so great a gift. May I wish you all a very blessed Christmas to you and your families. May the good news of the birth of Jesus Christ enter all your hearts, and may I wish you a Happy New Year too.
PLEASE PRAY FOR:
The Sick: Rose Lorden, William Hamilton, Ethan Knott, Caroline Horsbrugh, Colin Bertram, Gerry McIntee, Rose Williams, Brian Winter, Peter Coughlan, Carol Samba, Cesar Juan Urrutigoity, Mary English, Maureen Tanner, Mary Arnolda, Florence Clements, Carmen Bourne, Simon Barber, Amanda Lonergan, Mary Ethel Arnolda and Gerda Kerrigan.

Recently Dead: Canon John McDonald


Deanery Intentions for Fr Nigel Griffin and the parishioners of the St Edmunds Whitton.

Mass Intentions

Sat. 24   6.00pm  Children’s Mass for families everywhere
            11.15pm  Carols & Readings
            12.00 am  Midnight Mass

Sun. 25  8.30am  For the Intention of Irene Starzecki
            10.30am  Edward Preston Anniversary
            (There will be no evening Mass)

Mon. 26 10.00am  Intention of Joe & Kathleen Donagh
            (Ban Lavery)

Tues. 27 10.00am  Intentions of the Burns’ family
            (Blackman)

Wed. 28 10.00am  Intentions of Tricia, David & Styler Evans
            (Ban Lavery)

Thur. 29 10.00am  Intention of Mark Brooke
            (Ban Lavery)

Fri.  30 10.00am  Intention of Virginia, Michelle & Joey Cunningham
            (Ban Lavery)

Sat. 31 10.00am  Mary & Peter Thompson (RIP)
            (Ban Lavery)
            6.30pm  (Vigil) Laurence Pinto (Ibbett)

Sun.1 8.30am  Intention of John Kennedy (Blackman)
            10.30am  Deceased relatives and friends of the
                    Winter family  (Winter)
            6.30pm  Rita & John Lavery RIP (Ban Lavery)

Fr Peter will be holding

Open Morning

for

Signing School Forms

Saturday 14 January 2017

11.00am—1.00pm

(in the Parish Library (upstairs))

Important

Dates for your Diary

Talk & Discussion
on Pope Francis’ Evangelii Gaudium
as a blue print for the
21st century Missionary Parishes.

Wednesday 25 January 2017 &
Friday 3rd February

8.00pm -9.30pm In the Parish Library.

CONFIRMATION 2017

There is still time to apply to join the Confirmation programme for 2017. There will be an introductory parents meeting on Monday 16th January 2017 at 8pm and enrolments will take place during the 10.30am Mass on Sunday 22nd January.

Please fill out an application form from the back of the church and hand it into the Parish Office.

|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-------------|
**Diocese of Westminster Staff Vacancies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>Dept</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
<th>Closing date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parish Cleaner</td>
<td>Poplar</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
<td>05/01/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Entry Assistant</td>
<td>Fund raising</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
<td>05/01/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parish Cleaner</td>
<td>Hanwell Parish</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
<td>10/01/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation and Enterprise</td>
<td>Caritas</td>
<td>37.6 hours</td>
<td>11/01/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPEC Retreat Leader</td>
<td>SPEC</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
<td>16/01/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locum Night Concierge</td>
<td>Caritas Bakhita House</td>
<td>as required</td>
<td>31/01/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Fr Peter is very happy to visit our Sick & Housebound Parishioners**

If you would like to receive Holy Communion or celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, please contact the Parish Office 020 8892 3902 between 8-1.00pm weekdays.

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**School Reunion Celebrating 50 Years**

Calling all past pupils, teachers, parents and staff of Pope Paul Catholic Primary School.

As we are approaching our 50th Anniversary we invite you to be involved in the various celebrations we have planned as part of this very special occasion.

You are invited to join our School Reunion

Date: Saturday 28th January 2017

Time: from 7.30 pm

Venue: The Old Manor Pub and Restaurant, Wyllyotts Place, Darkes Lane, Potters Bar EN6 2JD.

We do hope you can come along.

An evening of friendship, laughter and nostalgia is guaranteed!

Please let us know if you would like to join us by emailing: admin@popepaul.herts.sch.uk

For those of you on FB, you are also welcome to join our FB page where you can re-connect with old school friends, share memories, photographs and keep up to date with current events too:

https://www.facebook.com/PopePaulCatholicPrimarySchoolReunion

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**A very happy Christmas**

Riona Scannell | Senior HR Advisor
Tel: (020) 7798 9167 | Fax: (020) 7798 9012 Vaughan House, 46 Francis Street, London SW1P 1QN

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The next publication of The Page will be on Sunday 7 January 2017
Marriage Course Days
at St Margarets of Scotland

Saturday 18 February 2017
& Saturday 13 May 2017
9.45am Registration
10.00am – 5.00pm Course
Lunch provided.
£70.00 per couple.

Please contact the Parish Office on 020 8892 3902
(between 8.00 - 1.00pm weekdays)

Geta

On behalf of the whole Management Team, Fr Paul and the
children of St Theresa’s School, a huge thank-you for your
support over the past year. Your donations at events and
online totalling £9,000 + so far have made a significant
contribution to the development of St Theresa’s School:

Update from Fr Paul: (logon to www.geta.org.uk for more
information and photos)

* we purchased a Mini bus - 15 seater School van to
  transport the little ones who can't walk to school
* we had a graduation party for those moving from Nursery
to Primary One next year.
* we are in the process of completing the Dormitory
* we have repainted the whole school with the school's
  colours
* we are procuring a new set of uniforms
* we have 162 boys and 121 girls on register (total 283)
* we are registering new pupils all the time and expect to add
  more in 2017
(note: the school year in Uganda runs from January to
November)

Please keep Fr Paul in your prayers over the festive period.
He devotes himself to his ministry despite continuing health
problems. For further information email info@geta.org.uk or
david.rose@geta.org.uk

Many thanks and God Bless at this joyous time. David Rose,
Chairman

Diocese of Westminster

Pilgrimage to Fatima

Centenary Year of the Apparitions
Led BY: Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Monday 24-Thursday 27 April 2017

Price £530.00 per person
Single Rooms £50 per person

Price includes flights with Air Portugal from
London Heathrow.
Travel Insurance £26 per person

Package includes 3 nights full board
accommodation at Hotel Steyler.

A full itinerary including a visit to Lisbon on day
of arrival, daily Mass 2x1/2 day excursions

Details: The Pilgrimage Office
46 Francis Street, London SW1P 1QN
Tel: 0207 798 9173

GETA

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Chairman

Serve the Lord with gladness

Would you like to become an Altar Server?

Have you made your First Holy Communion? If so, we
welcome you to join the Altar Servers. This is the last
opportunity to join this academic year, next in-take will be
September.

Becoming a server is to have the honour of assisting the
priest in the celebration of the Mass and other
ceremonies.

Any new servers are required to attend a training session
on 22nd January before 10:30 Mass and then serve for the
first time at that Mass.

If you would like to join, or have any questions, please
email Andrew Polland (andrewpolland@gmail.com) with
your name, email address and the Mass(es) you would like
to regularly serve at.

We look forward to welcoming you to the team.