



THE ARCHANGEL

St. Michael's School and Parish • Harts Lane • Burghclere • RG20 9JW

No. 35

December 2020

A Late Visitor

Dear parishioners,

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, perhaps this story will deepen our appreciation of what the Incarnation reveals, from the very beginning:

It was Bethlehem, the end of a long night. The star had just disappeared, and the last pilgrim had left the stable. The Virgin arranged the straw: at last the Child could sleep. But who can sleep the night of Christmas?

Gently the door opened, so gently that it seemed more like the wind was pushing it than a hand. A woman appeared on the threshold, covered with rags. She was so old and wrinkled that you would have thought her mouth was yet another deep wrinkle in a face furrowed and worn by timeless sorrow.

A fearful chill came over Mary when she saw her, as if a malicious fairy had come into the room. Fortunately Jesus was asleep. The ass and ox placidly munched their hay, as if there was nothing unusual, as if they had known this strange woman forever.

The Virgin did not take her eyes off her. The woman walked slowly, each step seeming to take centuries. She approached the manger. Thank God, Jesus was still sleeping. How can one sleep on Christmas night?

Suddenly the Child opened his eyes. His mother was completely astonished to see that the eyes of the old woman and the eyes of the Babe were exactly the same, they both shone with the same hope. The old woman sank down on the straw. One hand disappeared into her rags, looking for something.

Slowly, tiredly, the old woman pulled out of her clothes a little object hidden in her hand, and she gave it to the Child. After the treasures of the Wise Men and the offerings of the Shepherds, what could this new present be?



The stranger remained bent over the manger, seemingly in silent conversation with the unfrightened Child. Then the woman stood up as if relieved of some great burden. Her shoulders were no longer bent. She held her head high and her face seemed to have returned to the miraculous beauty of her youth.

She turned from the crib, smiled at Mary, and went out through the door into the dawning day. Now Mary could see the mysterious present.

The women had given the Child a small apple, the apple of the world's first sin and of every sin that has followed since. The apple shined in the hands of the new-born, like the globe of the new world that dawned, now that the Savior was come into the world. Eve had come to worship the Child born of her blood.

Sons and daughters of Eve, during this time of Advent and Christmas, come to the crib and there lay down that for which Christ came into this world. For He became man in order to take upon Himself our sins. But this He may do only if we freely offer our sins to Him with contrite and grateful heart.

May God grant us a spiritually fruitful Advent, in preparation for a holy Christmas, despite the times!

Fr. John Brucciani, prior

The Truth of God's Humanity

“**A**nd the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Our knee touches the ground, but our heart stands aloof. While we openly profess the Incarnation, why does our spirit spurn the genuflection? Because the dogma sits on only the surface of our soul. It consoles us without exciting us. And such is to be expected: a superficial awareness of something cannot breed love of the same. Concerning this article of faith, we must confess—as yet, we have only made its acquaintance.

Our basic familiarity, however, is a start. To some, that God would become man—let alone interact with men—is scornful superstition. Aristotle himself, who so cogently reasoned to the existence of God (i.e., the “unmoved mover”), supposed this deity too transcendent to busy himself with the mundane. God’s interaction with men would only debase him. The theists of the Enlightenment held a variation of the above. They conceived God as a watchmaker of sorts, one who both created and set the universe in motion. According to them, the order of the universe suffices to regulate itself; therefore, God’s intervention is superfluous. And we can pass over the atheists, who dismiss the mental exercise entirely.

But Revelation insists: as far as possible, God did debase himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6–7). God did intervene, for he “so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). God was not bound to this course of action. He freely took it. So what moved the Unmoved Mover? What interrupted him who “ordereth all things sweetly” (Wis. 8:1)?

We must understand that God is goodness itself, whereas creatures can only possess it. God’s goodness is not an attribute he can disengage willy-nilly. Goodness is God’s very essence, his very nature. God’s action is characteristically good. And goodness, so the axiom goes, spreads itself, it shares itself with others.

Nowhere is the dictum displayed more perfectly than within God himself, wherein the three divine Persons eternally exchange their infinite love. Yet God has chosen to communicate himself further. He has chosen to communicate himself to his creatures, and this in the most excellent way possible: the supreme good communicates itself to others in the supreme manner—the Incarnation. “Other ways were not wanting to God”, observes St. Augustine, “but a more fitting way to heal our misery did not exist.”

God eternally decrees his Incarnation, in all its particulars. “God’s decree”, writes Fr. L. B. Cunningham, “embraces from the beginning and at one and the same time the Incarnation of the Word, and the suffering and death his human body will undergo, and the fallen state of mankind which necessitates this sacrifice and satisfaction.” Foreseeing the Fall, God nevertheless “permits this evil as an occasion to manifest his tremendous love.” Accordingly, Holy Mother Church, awestruck by this spectacle of God’s mercy, can boldly and piously sing on Holy Saturday, “O happy fault that merited such and so great a Redeemer!” Far be it from the liturgy to celebrate Adam’s sin as such; even so, enraptured by the mystery, the Church employs hyperbole to voice her gratitude. For the Incarnation is indissolubly linked with our redemption: the Word was made flesh in order to be crucified.

Reared in Calvary’s vestibule, Christ is conceived, born and suckled for this purpose. This message of Advent and Christmas deserves deeper savouring. Let us now lay our eyes on the motive of Him in the manger: here is a newfound optic that can surely breed our belated love. In every genuflection henceforth, our heart should hurry to its homage. It should vie with our knee as to which will go lower. Accompanying the Shepherds, it should adore in peaceful prostration. 🕯

NOVENA TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

30th November to 8th December. The world is in a sorry state: economic collapse, international crisis, crisis in the Church, war, persecution of Christians in the Middle East, abortion, collapse of the family ... there is much to pray for. Catholics should therefore redouble their prayers, for we are dealing with the reign of Satan in the world today. Let us try to obtain much needed graces by praying a novena in preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception: “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel” (Genesis, 3:15).

The novena can be made up of an extra decade of the rosary followed by the triple invocation: “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” We should also confess our sins during this time and receive communion on the 8th December.

When once assisting at a rather violent exorcism, I experienced first hand the power of an invocation to “O Mary, conceived without sin.” The devil literally howled in desperation!

How to be patient

Our Lord said: "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart." See how patient people are happy. We prefer shops where the proprietor is kind and patient, but we try to avoid places where the owner is irascible. Amongst our acquaintances, we appreciate most especially those who are gentle and kind. Have you not noticed that the sick who are patient with their sufferings are also the most happy. Impatience increases pain. Doctors tell us that happy people usually live longer than those of an angry, impatient character.

We must try every day to become more and more patient. In order to achieve this, four rules must be observed: never speak when in an angry mood - never shout - never raise one's voice - never say unkind things.

In the home an irascible person is a demon. They are unhappy, they make others unhappy, and they commit frequent sins.

Fr. Paul O'Sullivan, O.P.

Humour

In a distant missionary land, a former cannibal is studying his Bible. A sophisticated Westerner makes fun of him: "My poor man, this is not the way to Progress. You're completely behind the times. Back in Europe, we gave up these old wives tales long ago. Your country stands no chance with a book like that."

"Well, sir, if this book had not made its way here, I would have had you for breakfast long ago!"

The Carmelite Nun and the Mother

One day a kind old lady, mother of eight children, three of whom were priests, listened to a glowing sermon on the wonderful merits of Carmelite nuns. After mass she remarked: "For the past 30 years I too have been getting up every night, not to sing Matins, but to tend to my children. For 30 years, I too have practiced great mortifications, not with any instruments of penance, but by happily accepting the privations and sacrifices that come with a large family. And, like the Carmelite nuns, I have done all for the love of God and of my neighbor."

The mother was right. If holiness is more easily attained in the religious life, parenthood can also sanctify the souls to an eminent degree by the daily fulfillment of our duties of state.

Advent Resolutions

Christians do not deprive themselves of things they like, rather, they prefer something greater than the things they like. Advent should expand the desires of the heart. The purpose of penance is to remove that which barricades the door of the heart and prevents God from entering and taking full possession. A small dam is enough to hold up a river. Often little things of insignificance hold us back from greater holiness: home comforts, hobbies, sleeping in. Penance is like an explosive placed at the foot of the barrage. Once it is breached, the waters of divine grace can flow freely and

soften our hardened souls. This Advent, try to locate something that holds us back from a greater love and service of God. Remove it, and God will be born again in us, as He was in Bethlehem.

Evergreens, holly, mistletoe and poinsettias

Centuries ago, Christians brought plants and flowers into the celebration of Christmas, for did not Christ come to uphold the dignity of all God's creation? The natural world, as well as humans, angels and animals, should have a part in welcoming him.

Evergreens, symbols of life and eternity from ancient times, have always had a prominent place in Christian celebrations. Holly, with its green leaves, its prickly points and red berries, suggested that the Child born in the manger would wear a crown of thorns and shed drops of blood. Mistletoe, long associated in the pre-Christian world with healing, became a symbol of the healing power of Christ.

The poinsettia, from Central America, with its bright, star-like flowers, is a natural reminder of the Star of Bethlehem. Other plants that bloom during this season are images also of the Root of David that flowered with new life.

The Advent Wreath

The Advent Wreath is a circular garland of evergreen branches that represent eternity. On the wreath, five candles are typically arranged. Each Sunday of Advent, a candle is lit. The candles represent the coming of the light of Christ into the world. They are lit progressively, thus symbolizing the approach of midnight when He is born Who was the true light, "which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." (Jo. 1:9)

The Christmas Tree

The Christmas Tree The Christmas tree probably originated from popular early medieval religious plays, "the Paradise Plays," performed in churches and town squares of Europe during the Advent season. The plays told the story of the human race from the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Paradise till the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. On stage during the play was a great tree hung with apples, symbolizing the Garden of Paradise. Soon people began the custom of putting a "paradise tree" laden with gifts and lighted with candles in their homes during the Christmas season to celebrate paradise regained through the coming of Christ.

Representing many things - the original tree of paradise, the life-giving tree of Christ's cross, the tree John the Apostle saw in the Book of Revelations, "a tree of life, which yields twelve crops of fruit, one for each month of the year, for the healing of the nations" - the Christmas tree is rich in Christian symbolism.





Saint Michael's School Annual Christmas Raffle

Our Christmas Raffle is a much loved and anticipated event of the school and community life. Unfortunately, due to restrictions, our annual raffle cannot take place in person this year. We are, however, happy to announce that the raffle will still be going ahead, ONLINE.



Check the website to see all the prizes you can win!

✓ CAN'T ACCESS ONLINE?

Just send payment to the school for the number of tickets you wish to purchase, with your name and contact details, and we will enter them into the draw. We will call you to confirm.

✓ WANT TO PROMOTE OUR RAFFLE?

You can promote our raffle by winning ticket-sales credits! Highest scoring sellers qualify for prizes.

- ☞ Individuals: sign up on the [raffle page!](#)
- ☞ Family Teams: sign up on the [raffle page!](#)
- ☞ Teams of Friends: sign up on the [raffle page!](#)

Tickets available:

[CLICK HERE](#) >>

- £1 = 10 tickets
- £5 = 50 tickets
- £10 = 100 tickets
- £15 = 200 tickets
- £20 = 350 tickets
- £25 = 500 tickets
- £30 = 700 tickets
- £50 = 1200 tickets

[CLICK HERE](#) >>

ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL - HARTS LANE - BURGHCLERE - R20 9JW - 01635 278137

PAPER TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM

- SCHOOL OFFICE
- ☎ 01635 278137
- secretary@sanctusmichael.com

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO CATCH UP WITH
MISSED SUNDAY COLLECTIONS!**

FAST DAYS FOR SSPX 3RD ORDER MEMBERS

- Advent Ember Days
- Dec. 7 - Vigil of Immaculate Conception

Memorial Poinsettias Christmastide



If you wish to place around the altar poinsettias in memory of a loved one, please fill out and hand in the forms before 15th December. The January newsletter will list the names of those remembered. Holy Mass will be offered for them and for their benefactors on January 1st, Feast of the Circumcision and Octave Day of Christmas. Poinsettias (for the sanctuary and church): £10 a pot.

	Liturgical Calendar December 2020	SMS
1	Feria of Advent	
2	St. Bibiana, Virgin & Martyr	
3	St. Francis Xavier, Confessor	7:15
4	St. Peter Chrysologus, 1st Fri - Holy Hour 6:00 PM	7:15 / 19:00
5	Feria of Advent - 1st Sat.	7:30 / 12:00
6	Second Sunday of Advent	6:30, 7:30
	<i>2nd Collection for District seminarians</i>	9:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
7	St. Ambrose, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
8	Immaculate Conception of the BVM	7:15 / 19:00
9	Feria of Advent	7:15
10	Feria of Advent	7:15
11	St. Damasus I, Pope & Confessor	7:15
12	Our Lady of Guadalupe	7:30 / 12:00
13	Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)	6:30, 7:30
		9:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
14	Feria of Advent	7:15
15	Feria of Advent	7:15
16	Ember Wednesday of Advent	7:15
17	Feria of Advent	7:15
18	Ember Friday of Advent	7:15
19	Ember Saturday of Advent	7:30 / 12:00
20	Fourth Sunday of Advent (Rorate)	6:30, 7:30
		9:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
21	St. Thomas, Apostle	7:15
22	Feria of Advent	7:15
23	Feria of Advent	7:15
24	Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord	7:15 / 12:00
25	NATIVITY of OUR LORD (<i>Confessions from 23:00</i>)	00:00 / 9:00, 11:00
26	St. Stephen, Deacon & Protomartyr	8:00 / 12:00
27	Sunday in the Octave of Christmas	6:30, 7:30
		9:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
28	Holy Innocents, Martyrs	7:15
29	Octave of Christmas	7:15
30	Octave of Christmas	7:15
31	Octave of Christmas	7:15
1	Circumcision of Our Lord - Octave of Christmas	7:30 / 12:00
	<i>Holy Hour 11:00 to welcome New Year</i>	

MASS ATTENDANCE REMAINS REGULATED.

Please use the noticeboard booking system to ensure that everyone is spread out across all the masses. Please also observe as best possible the hygiene requirements of these strange times, out of respect for others.

<https://noticeboard.sanctusmichael.com/stmichaels/>