

SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER 2019 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The First Reading: King Ahaz of Judah is a frightened man. Threatened by foreign powers, he is tempted to ignore God's promise of protection and seek godless alliances instead. God invites him to ask for any sign of God's presence, but Ahaz is committed to seeking help elsewhere, and he appeals to the pious notion of not putting God to the test.

The Second Reading: St Paul opens his magisterial letter to the Romans by describing himself as a servant, or slave, of Christ Jesus. Paul can rejoice in being a servant, because he knows the goodness of the One he serves.

The Gospel: Near the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, the prophecy made to King Ahaz is taken up: Jesus is Emmanuel, 'God-with-us.' Jesus himself will take up this theme again, in the last line of this Gospel: 'Know that I am with you always, until the end of the age.'

BAPTISM: The **January** classes start on Tuesday 7th & 14th in the Parish Office, No5 Berrymead Gardens, at 7pm. The welcoming ceremony on Sunday 19th, and the Baptisms on Sunday 26th at 1.15pm. Please register your attendance with the office in advance.

CHRISTMAS WISHES: On behalf of Frs. Fintan, Pearse, Chris and myself, we would like to wish you all a wonderful Christmas, full of the peace, joy, and happiness. May the Christmas season fill your home with joy, your heart with love and your life with laughter. As the whole universe waits for this blissful day to honour Christ our saviour's birth; let peace, comfort and joy surround you and yours not just at Christmas but throughout the new year 2020. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all!

Christmas is a wonderful time of year but it also demands a lot of preparation, hard work and effort by so many people. Can we thank all those people who do so much for our parish community behind the scenes and often go unnoticed. For example, those who clean the church each week, those who look after the altar, decorated with flowers and keep it shining brightly. Those who keep the sacristy and altar linens, those who enrich our liturgy in ministering in word, sacrament and music, and all those who serve at the altar. The Admin. staff in the office, those who maintain the building and grounds. Those who give so generously of their time to handing on the faith in sacramental preparation and children's liturgy. Those who do our outreach to the sick and housebound, the homeless and the poor. Those who dedicate themselves to the prayer life of the parish and our daily mass goes, the power house of prayer for the rest of us. Many thanks to you all, for all you do for us and for our parish community. We thank you all for your support and kindness to us as your priests. Really, your good deeds do not go unnoticed, may you receive the reward of your kindness. Many thanks. Fr Fergal.

MASS TIMES: Mass on Thursday 26th December and Wednesday 1st January will be at 11am.

CHRISTMAS DAY COLLECTIONS: The collection on Christmas day is for the priest of the parish.

MIDNIGHT MASS & CAROL SERVICE: There will be a Carol Service at 11:30pm on Christmas Eve, followed by midnight Mass.

FAIRTRADE PARISH: We have been a Fairtrade Parish since summer 2019, trying to support our global family. When donating tea, coffee and refreshments, please consider buying Fairtrade items. These can be purchased at reasonable prices from Coop, Waitrose, M&S and other supermarkets. Many thanks.

CHRISTMAS MASS CARDS are available from the parish office, £1 each.

GIVING TREE: Thank you to everyone who is contributing to the giving tree. There is still time to take 1 or 2 tags from the tree and add the items to your shopping list. Bring the items to the office and we will use them to make up hampers for the needy.

CONFIRMATION 2020: For those wishing to be confirmed this year please watch this space, more information coming soon. Many thanks Fr. Fergal.

OUR CALL TO STEWARDSHIP: Thank you to all those who took part in our 'Planned Giving'. Due to the overwhelming response we are still processing the forms. We ask for your patience.

OFFERTORY ENVELOPES: Following the parish stewardship campaign, if you requested new offertory envelopes these will be available for collection from the Sacristy from the weekend of 21 December. Please ask one of the priests if you would like to collect your new box of envelopes. Due to GDPR regulations it's not possible to leave the boxes in the side chapel for collection. Thank you and Happy Christmas from the Gift Aid Team.

SINGERS FOR CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT MASS & CAROL SERVICE: Anyone who is interested in singing in the Christmas celebrations at the midnight mass please attend the rehearsal in the Church on Monday 23rd December at 8pm. All are welcome!

CAFOD WORLD GIFTS offers a great alternative for those who don't need anything, but might appreciate a gift which helps poor communities to access services like basic healthcare, clean water, and education. A certificate will be provided detailing the gifts given to a community overseas on your behalf. Please take home a catalogue after Mass.

WALK IN CLINIC: A qualified therapist will help ease your pain every Friday 9 – 12pm at No.3 Berrymead Gardens. Free of charge.

TEA AND COFFEE: Tea and coffee will be served in the hall after the 9am and 10.30am Masses.