

Advent 2020

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter; in these strange times, while we contend with Covid and its ever-changing scenario, we are concentrating on Advent with a view to sending some Christmas thoughts a little later.

At the time of our last newsletter we were just emerging from Lockdown One and beginning to take a few steps forward, with our churches being open for Mass and other liturgies, though under strict conditions, of course. Having been able to taste celebrating together in church for a short time, we now find ourselves in 'Lockdown (though not quite) Two' which, in some ways, seems harder this time round. We hope, however, that this current lockdown will enable us to celebrate Our Saviour's birth more fully and appropriately than simply joining in an online Mass celebrated by a priest with no congregation – however prayerful and beautiful that might be.

Just as we have been doing we can continue, meanwhile, to exercise our ministries of care, prayer and hospitality for those we know of who are in need. Even when we emerge from this lockdown, there will be many people who continue to feel alone, lonely and/or isolated and it is important for them to continue experience our ministry and to know that we continue to care. The Bishop's Conference of England and Wales has produced some leaflets, details below, which are easily accessed and are designed to help those who are affected in different ways by the Coronavirus. It may be that we can print off some of these to give to friends or neighbours for whom they might be helpful but who may not have internet access.

As we are focussing particularly on Advent in this newsletter, we include a beautiful reflection written by Cath McCarthy, a member of our cathedral parish of Saints Peter and Paul.

***The Advent Season**

Advent (from 'ad-venire' in Latin or 'to come to'), as we know, begins the Church's liturgical year and encompasses the four Sundays and weekdays leading up to Christmas. This year we move into Year B and, as we journey through Advent, we look ahead in preparation, first directing our minds and hearts to Christ's second coming at the end of time, and then to the anniversary of Our Lord's birth at Christmas.

For Readers, the Diocese of Salford produces readers' notes for each Sunday of the year which are available on their website (see <https://www.salfordliturgy.org.uk/>). The Liturgy Office has collated the Advent Readers' guides into a little booklet available for download [here](#). Advent might be a good time to encourage readers to make a prayerful reading of the scriptures part of their own, prayerful, rhythm of the day - even if they will not be exercising that ministry during this Advent.

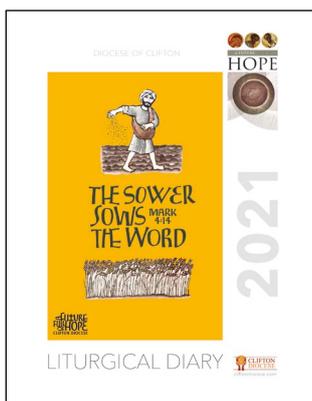
The final days of Advent, from December 17 to December 24, focus particularly on our preparation for the celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas) and it is here that we celebrate the ancient prayers of Advent which are known as the O Antiphons. These Antiphons have been prayed since the 5th Century but became popular during the Middle Ages. They speak of humanity's desire and longing for God, a longing which has existed throughout the history of

God's people from the beginning of time through Abraham, Moses and David, fulfilled on the night when Emmanuel (God with us) was born.

Each prayer begins with one of the seven titles attributed to Jesus: Wisdom (Sapientia in Latin), Lord of the House of Israel (Adonai), Root of Jesse (Radix), Key of David (Clavis), Rising Dawn (Oriens), King of the People (Rex) and God with us (Emmanuel). In Latin the initials of the titles when read backwards means: 'Tomorrow I will be with you' ('Ero cras'). This is clearly a reference to the approaching Feast of Christmas. Each prayer was prayed in the evening on the days leading up to Christmas Eve. The desire of the ages, the longing of the nations is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. Jesus is Lord, Wisdom, Key of David, King of all nations, Root of Jesse, Desire of the nations, Light of the world.

***An Advent Reflection (Phil – please insert attached)**

***2021 Liturgical Diary**



The Liturgical Diary has been completed should now be available in parishes and online. The cost remains unchanged and, at £6.50 per copy, is a real bargain. It contains, in addition to all the information about Liturgical texts for each day, a short piece about each of the saints whose lives are celebrated during the year and a host of catechetical material, along with a number of blessings and prayers for various occasions.

***Bishops' Conference Liturgy Office Resources**

When Mass cannot be celebrated publicly

<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Flu/No-Mass-A4.pdf>

If you are unable to attend the funeral of a loved one, this offers a short time of prayer for use at home at the time of the funeral. It is intended to be used by either individuals or a group (where they live in the same house).

<http://liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Flu/No-Funeral-A4.pdf>

Other helpful resources to support the bereaved will be found on their website here:

[Vigil at Home](#)(pdf) - Prayers to support the period of waiting when someone is very ill in hospital/ care-home.

[When someone has died](#) (pdf) - ideas for support and prayer

[Simple support ideas](#) (pdf)- some practical ways of supporting the bereaved at this time

[Service of remembrance](#) (pdf) - An outline and prayers together with ideas for preparation for a service for a group unable to attend the funeral and either in the same household or able to connect via social media.

[Readings for Funerals](#)

Remember, too, that in addition to this newsletter, there is a wealth of information to be found on the Liturgy Office Section of the Diocesan Website.

The Christmas Season

It often seems that we spend much of Advent simply anticipating Christmas – Christmas shopping, Christmas Fairs, Christmas plays, Christmas decorations and Christmas Carols, to name but a few – and then Christmas itself is over and done with in just one day. As life has changed so much for us all this year perhaps we could try to concentrate on Advent as a Season, in a much more reflective way perhaps, than we are used to – and then let us reclaim Christmas as a Season, too. Watch out for a special newsletter during Advent with ideas on how to do just that!

Wishing you all a very blessed Advent