

Liturgy Office Newsletter – Winter 2021



As we enter a new liturgical year (Year C) and 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. Reflecting on the excitement of being able to have fuller gatherings this year with friends and families, unlike last year, it would be all too easy to get caught up in the excitement of the secular side of Christmas – the feasting and festivities, the gifts and the goodies. We can forget, or simply dilute, what it is really all about – the birth of our Saviour,

Emmanuel, God-with-us, who was born in a simple stable or outhouse with just livestock for company, and courtesy of a kind-hearted inn-keeper who had no rooms available but took pity on Mary and Joseph. Difficult as it can be, especially when the shops have been 'selling' Christmas since September, let's try to celebrate Advent throughout the Advent Season and move on to celebrating Christmas for all of the Christmas Season.

At the time of writing, our churches are open again and our bishops are encouraging us to see the Eucharist as the gift of love that it is, nourishing and sustaining us, and, if we possibly can, to return to Mass unless we have a legitimate fear of being out and about or of gathering together. Their reflection on this – Honouring Sunday – is reprinted in the dropdown box below.

As we gather in our communities we also begin to pick up on some of our Liturgical Ministries, particularly the Ministry of Hospitality, of Reader and of taking Holy Communion to the sick. The Liturgy Office will provide some more formation on these but, meanwhile, do remember that guidelines for these ministries can be found on our webpages [here](#). Readers might also be interested in the Readers' Guide for Advent for Year C which can be found [here](#)

Epiphany



When it comes to Epiphany, the celebration of the revelation of Christ to the world, it is tempting to take down the decorations and think 'that's all over now until next Christmas'. But you could think about an Epiphany celebration. The wise men brought gifts to Jesus, gifts symbolising the importance of Jesus' birth - the gold represented his royal standing, frankincense his divine birth and myrrh his mortality. Have they been in the crib scene all along? If so, why not leave them a

little way out of the scene and move them gradually until they 'arrive' on Epiphany? You might have a go at making a 'Galette des rois' (a kings' cake) to celebrate the day – there are lots of recipes to be found on the internet. Or perhaps we could have an Epiphany Carol Service or an Epiphany blessing of our home: using blessed chalk, a parent can mark the inside of the main door of the house with the initials of the Magi and a code of the current year connected with crosses: 20+C+M+B+22. Another explanation of the initials (C-M-B)

are the first letters of the blessing: *Christus mansionem benedicat* ('May Christ bless the house').

The Great 'O Antiphons'

The Great O Antiphons are seven brief prayers that are traditionally sung on successive evenings starting on **17 December**. These ancient supplications beautifully express the Christian Church's profound yearning for her long expected Saviour. Indeed, they form the basis of the popular Advent hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* by English hymn writer John Neale.

These Great O Antiphons are rich in meaning and nuance. Each antiphon begins with the acclamation 'O,' addresses Christ by one of His messianic titles from the Old Testament and ends with a heartfelt plea for His coming. The sequence of the antiphons is theologically precise, progressing from before the creation of the universe, through the messianic prophecies of Israel and culminating with the Incarnation and birth of Christ in Bethlehem. The initials of each Latin title - Sapientia, Adonai, Radix, Clavis, Oriens, Rex, and Emmanuel - combine to form SARCORE. When this is arranged backwards, it spells the phrase ERO CRAS, which means 'Tomorrow, I shall come.' Christians since the Middle Ages have been fascinated by this coincidence because Christmas Eve (December 24) falls on the day after the singing of the final antiphon.

Honouring Sunday

During the pandemic, public worship was suspended for a time and there have been restrictions on parish life. As a result, people have been exploring other ways to practice their faith including Spiritual Communion via live streaming.

As people begin returning to more regular patterns of parish life and following the first face to face meeting of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in Leeds, the bishops have issued the following statement about the importance of honouring Sunday:

Honouring Sunday

As the Synodal Pathway of listening and discerning unfolds, we the bishops of England and Wales, are paying particular attention to the hopes and fears, the joys and anxieties of all who are sharing their thoughts and feelings with us.

Longing for our Lord

We are attentive to the experience of the last year or so, when we have lived our faith through the limitations of the pandemic. We have heard of the longing which some express as a "homesickness". We want to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. We yearn to celebrate the sacraments together, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We desire to be nourished by our Lord in Holy Communion. The live streaming of the Mass and the remarkable response of our Catholic communities to those in need, have provided comfort, sustenance and resilience.

The Eucharist, source and summit

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our spiritual and pastoral life. Many people have said to us that they have appreciated the noble simplicity of the Mass at this time, which has allowed the mystery and majesty of our Lord's sacrificial love to shine through.

The central appeal of the Mass, its beauty and its transcendence, raises our minds and hearts to God in an unambiguous and compelling manner. Our Lord Jesus invites us to receive anew the gift of Sunday as the preeminent day, the day of the Resurrection, when the Church gathers to celebrate the Eucharist. Here we stand together before our heavenly Father, offering our thanksgiving and prayer, through our Saviour in the Holy Spirit. Here we receive Christ in his Word. Here we are nourished by Christ in his precious Body and Blood. This is our primary joy, for which there is no substitute, and from which we draw our strength.

The Gift of the Sunday Eucharist

The Sunday Eucharist is a gift; as God's holy people we are called to praise and thank God in the most sublime way possible. When the Church speaks of the Sunday obligation, it reminds us that attending Mass is a personal response to the selfless offering of Christ's love.

At this time, we recognise that for some people there may be certain factors which hinder attendance at Sunday Mass. The pandemic is clearly not over. The risk of infection is still present. For some, there is legitimate fear in gathering together. As your bishops, we recognise that these prevailing circumstances suggest that not everyone is yet in the position to fulfil the absolute duty to attend freely Sunday Mass.

Responding to the Gift

We now encourage all Catholics to look again at the patterns which they have formed in recent months with regard to going to Mass on Sundays. This would include consideration and reflection about what we might do on Sundays, such as sports or shopping, or other leisure and social activities. This review, and the decisions which arise from it, fall to every Catholic and we trust this will be done with honesty, motivated by a real love for the Lord whom we encounter in the Mass.

The Sunday Mass is the very heartbeat of the Church and of our personal life of faith. We gather on the "first day of the week," and devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42). The Eucharist sustains us and spurs us on, renewing our gratitude and our hope. When we say "Amen" to Christ in receiving his Body and Blood, we express the love of God which is deep within us, and at the end of Mass, when we are sent forth, we express our love for our neighbour, especially those in need. These two dimensions reveal the full meaning of our faith. We are gathered together and sent out, we pray and are fed, we worship and we adore; these are intrinsic to our lives as those baptised into Christ.

Approved at the Plenary Assembly of Bishops in Leeds.

A Call to Love



Liturgy

a call to love

To coincide with the release of the bishops' reflection on Honouring Sunday we have produced a series of videos which it is hoped will remind and encourage people of an understanding of the Mass and the gift that it is to us all. A number of different aspects of the Mass are explored – the many ways in which we encounter Christ and how that affects our – for example how the Word we hear proclaimed is Christ speaking directly to us; how the

Eucharist enables us, who receive this great gift of love, to go out and **be** that love for others – all this and much more. We hope that this series will help us to re-engage with our communities and our sharing in the Eucharist and to re-discover Christ through a renewed appreciation of the liturgy.

Please remember to explore the many seasonal resources on our webpages. Under 'Further resources' you will find a number of rites and blessings for the Advent and Christmas seasons on the website here <https://cliftdiocese.com/liturgy-office/> e.g.

Rite for blessing a Christmas Tree

Rite for blessing a Manger or Christmas Tree

Epiphany Carol Liturgy

Epiphany Blessing of Homes

We have also been made aware of a resource for those who might be intellectually challenged

<http://www.kairosforum.org/space/> this contains downloadable files and resource guides

<http://www.kairosforum.org/space/weekly-gospel/> making the Sunday Gospel more accessible.

– these will be found in the useful links tab

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Dates for your diary:

Finally, a couple of reminders of important dates for your diary for the coming year: Ash Wednesday, which is a day of fasting and abstinence, will be on 2 March and the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion - when the bishop meets with all those who will be baptised or received into full communion with the Catholic Church at Easter and their names are entered into the Book of the Elect – will be held, in the cathedral, on Saturday 5 March at 11am.

Art & Architecture

Please remember that the Art & Architecture Committee of the Liturgy Office is here to help you, especially with guidance on matters of liturgical Art & Architecture. If you are considering any changes to your parish which will affect the liturgical and devotional life of the parish it is important that you contact the Liturgy Office for guidance and permission where necessary.

Please refer to pages 159 and 160 of this year's Liturgical Diary for details, see <https://cliftdiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Art-Architecture.pdf> or contact liturgy@cliftdiocese.com

Diary

The Liturgical Diary is now 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 Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours each day, little hagiographies of the saints celebrated throughout the year. There are explanatory items about the liturgical seasons and feasts celebrated, a number of blessings for use throughout the year and a year planner for 2022.

2022 Clifton Diocesan Directory

The Clifton Diocese Directory 2022 contains practical contact details. Our book illustrates the wide range of social and community activities that involve the Catholic Church in the West of England. The directory is now in its 72nd year of publication.

With best wishes and prayers for a very blessed Christmas Season