

## *St. Thomas the Apostle R.C. Church*

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22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

### *1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent Year B*



***Happy New Year Everyone! And Welcome Back!***

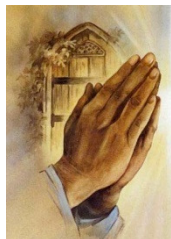
**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December 6pm Sacrament of Reconciliation followed by Mass for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent (Mass Intention: Deceased members of the Sharrock and Wilkinson Families)**

**Mass will be at 9am on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December. (Mass Intention: Agnes, John Madden and Alan Atkinson)**

**Please continue to spread your Sunday Mass over the whole week.**

**If the stewards could revert to the rota we had before this last lockdown, that would be wonderful. If anyone else would like to offer their services to steward it would be a great help.**

**Please pray for** Bob Billington, Evelyn Noblet, Frank & Josie Higham, Wilf Houghton, Teresa Smith, Mary Duckworth, Mandy Cuff and especially all the residents of Catterall House, who are still in lockdown from earlier in the year, and all our sick and housebound parishioners and anyone you know who needs our prayers.



**Also, remember in your prayers** John Horn who died recently, and all those whose anniversaries occur about this time; Marjorie Hodgson, Susanna Dewhurst, Francis Johnson, Rev. Canon J Tootell, Robert Slater, John Walmsley, Joseph Smith, Ellen Baines, Mary Bamber John Parkinson, John Whiteside, Josephine Fowler. *May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. AMEN*

**TODAY** – There is a Special Collection for the Diocesan Poor Mission Fund

**THURSDAY** – A Day of Prayer for Migrants

#### **Celebrate Advent with CAFOD**

After a year of uncertainty, we all need the hope, peace and true comfort and joy that the Advent season can offer. CAFOD has a range of resources and virtual events to help us come together online to pray, reflect and celebrate as we prepare for the coming of our Lord. Visit [cafod.org.uk/parishes](http://cafod.org.uk/parishes) to learn more. [This Advent you can help share comfort and joy with families around the world, like Saba's. Saba and her three children fled their home in Myanmar to escape horrific violence and persecution. They were targeted because of their ethnicity. Thanks to your support last year, Saba was given essential materials to build a shelter – so finally her children have a safe place to call home.] We can stretch out our hands to people living in poverty and refugees by donating to CAFOD's Advent Appeal at [cafod.org.uk/advent](http://cafod.org.uk/advent)

### CAFOD World Gifts

World Gifts, CAFOD's range of virtual gifts, make a real difference to families living in poverty across the world. While we have the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown here, we can still be good neighbours to our sisters and brothers overseas by giving World Gifts as Christmas presents to family and friends. The Keep Clean Kit gift for £6 and the Vegetable Garden gift for £10 are just two gifts that will help vulnerable families affected by the pandemic to protect and feed themselves. Let's spread joy and hope around the world this Christmas. Visit [cafod.org.uk/worldgifts](http://cafod.org.uk/worldgifts)

### JOIN THE PARISH EACH EVENING AT 7PM TO PRAY TOGETHER THE DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET

Let us keep praying together in our homes for all the sick and an end to the pandemic. We pray for all those whose lives have been affected by Covid 19, especially the sick, we pray that doctors, nurses and carers all over the world have the kindness, compassion and strength to keep going; for Scientists working on a vaccine and that the Governments of the world do what they can to help poorer nations to fight this Pandemic.

### *Saints Feast Days This Week*

**Monday – St Andrew**, Apostle, Patron of Scotland (*a good day to pray for Scotland*)

He was the brother of St. Peter, who was also known as Simon bar-Jonah.

He and Andrew shared the same father, so the latter would have been known as Andrew bar-Jonah. Andrew is regularly mentioned *after* Simon Peter, which suggests that he was Peter's younger brother.

Like his brother Peter, and their partners James and John, Andrew was initially a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee.

**Thursday - St Francis Xavier**

With encouragement from his friend Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Francis Xavier devoted himself to religious service and became one of the founders of the Jesuit order. Much of his life was spent tending to missions in areas such as India and Japan. He was 46 when he died on China's Shangchuan Island on December 3, 1552.

### Here are some useful links to help you make the most of Advent online

[Bishop Paul Swarbrick | The Bishop's Blog \(bishopsvarbricks.blog\)](http://bishopsvarbricks.blog)

[\(2\) StClares Church - YouTube](#) – Mass at 9.30am daily

[ChurchServices.tv live mass and services from Churches in the UK and Ireland](#)

[Interactive online Advent calendar | CAFOD](#)

[First Sunday of Advent - November 29, 2020 - Liturgical Calendar | Catholic Culture](#)

[Pray-as-you-Go | Daily prayers and meditations](#) by the Jesuits (good for busy people)

<https://www.walsingham.org.uk>.

<https://www.youtube.com/JesComTV/> The Word Exposed with Cardinal Tagle

[Preview Advent Reflections for 2020 — My Catholic Life!](#)

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

17<sup>th</sup> December – Birthday of Pope Francis (1936)

*If you have anything to go in the newsletter please contact Catherine on  
Tel: 01995 640360 or email [cath360@btinternet.com](mailto:cath360@btinternet.com).*

## READINGS

**First reading:** Isaiah 63:16-17,64:1,3-8

O that you would tear the heavens open and come down  
You, Lord, yourself are our Father,  
'Our Redeemer' is your ancient name.  
Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways  
and harden our hearts against fearing you?  
Return, for the sake of your servants,  
the tribes of your inheritance.  
Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down!  
– at your Presence the mountains would melt.  
No ear has heard,  
no eye has seen  
any god but you act like this  
for those who trust him.  
You guide those who act with integrity  
and keep your ways in mind.  
You were angry when we were sinners;  
we had long been rebels against you.  
We were all like men unclean,  
all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing.  
We have all withered like leaves  
and our sins blew us away like the wind.  
No one invoked your name  
or roused himself to catch hold of you.  
For you hid your face from us  
and gave us up to the power of our sins.  
And yet, Lord, you are our Father;  
we the clay, you the potter,  
we are all the work of your hand.

**Second reading:** 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

We are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed  
May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace.

I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ; and God is faithful.

**Gospel**

Mark 13:33-37

If he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep  
Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!

## HOMILY

“If I could hide ‘neath the wings  
of the bluebird as she sings,  
six o’clock alarm would never ring”

But it does ring, for us no less than for Davy Jones and the rest of the Monkees more than half a century ago. Waking and rising may be an easier business now than in the days before central heating, those now departed days of frost patterns on the windows and ice cold lino underfoot, but it is still a shock to the system. I have to confess that I prefer to be awake and up before the deadly clangour of the alarm, in order to ease the shock, but a shock it remains.

It is strange that, as a child, I and probably you resented the time given to sleep, considering it a waste of the time to be spent exploring and enjoying life, yet now I grasp at it as the most welcome of friends. Today, though, and throughout these early days of Advent, the call of the Lord constantly rings in our ears, as insistently as that six o’clock alarm: “Stay awake, stay awake, stay awake!” Did you count the occurrences of the phrase in today’s Gospel? It cropped up seven times in four and a half lines, so more than once every two lines. Something which is repeated so frequently cannot be ignored: somehow, despite the dulling allure of the short winter days, we must in some way or other stay awake.

Why? In order that our senses may remain sharp enough to recognize and respond to the Lord’s coming; that threefold coming of which St. Bernard speaks—Jesus’ first coming, born of the Virgin in our human nature; His final coming as our judge at the end of time; and, perhaps most importantly of all, His present coming in every moment and every situation of our lives.

“Oh that you might tear the heavens open and come down”, prays the prophet. The Lord has done so, and will do so, and is doing so. Are we sufficiently awake to notice?

“We could hardly fail to notice His first coming,” you may suggest, not least because, in this year of restrictions and limitations, people have begun to prepare earlier than ever. Yes, but what are they preparing for? How many Nativity scenes are there among the trees and streamers? And what of Advent calendars? No longer do they display holy pictures: behind the windows now are chocolates, courtesy of Spiderman or Peppa Pig. In any case, if we are truly awake, we will be aware that preparation to recall that first coming doesn’t begin until 17<sup>th</sup> December.

What then of His final coming? “You do not know when the master of the house is coming” says the Lord. We do not know when life on earth will end; more particularly, we cannot tell when our own earthly life will be snuffed out. Young, middle aged, elderly, can all fall victim to that sudden illness, that unforeseen accident: how well prepared will I be to see God face to face?

Fifty years ago, give or take a couple of weeks, I would have been sitting in a train as it pulled out of Euston station on my way home at the end of term, to be confronted in a moment or two by a gable end to the right of the tracks—whether it is still there I have no idea—proclaiming in huge letters “Prepare to meet thy God”, not the most encouraging message at the beginning of a rail journey, but nonetheless conveying an important message. If indeed the Lord did make His final visit today, how prepared would I be?

Finally, how awake am I to the coming of the Lord, to His Advent, in every moment? To His presence, as we were reminded by last week’s Gospel, in our neighbour? To His coming in the events, and even the non-events, of our daily round? In the challenges and opportunities of this time of pandemic? In the Eucharist, the ultimate sign of Jesus’ presence, though not yet in glory? That Eucharist to which so many now have access only remotely, via the streaming of Mass and Eucharistic adoration? We awoke and rose this morning. How awake are we now?