

**Feasts of the Week:**

Monday – St Andrew

Thursday – St Francis Xavier. Migrants Day.

Friday – St John Damascene

Please pray for all those whose anniversaries occur about this time.

**The November List:** if anyone would like a deceased friend or relative remembered during November, there are mass offering envelopes in a plastic folder in the grotto to the right of the church door (which can then be put through the presbytery letterbox) or at the back of church. Your loved one will have Mass offered for them.

**A CHRISTMAS APPEAL FOR INGOL FOOD BANK**

**For some people, Christmas this year will be harder than ever.** From now until Christmas, we will be collecting for Ingol Food bank in Preston. If you would be able to give any tins or packets of food – please leave them in a carrier bag in the box at the back of church or in the box by the presbytery if church is not open. Many thanks for supporting the needy and vulnerable during these difficult times.

**SICK OF THE PARISH**

Frank Ashton is currently in hospital after a very serious emergency operation. Although improving, his condition is still critical. Please remember him in your prayers.

If you would like the parish to pray for someone who is currently sick, please email [news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk](mailto:news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk) or ring Father Sony on 01772 865229. It will be then be included in the newsletter. We have an area in church where you can write a prayer intention on a card and hang it up if you prefer it not to go on the parish newsletter.

**CHURCH DONATIONS**

With many people still unable to attend church we still need to maintain an income for maintenance. There are several ways you can still make your contributions including by cheque or direct debit. For details please go to the church website or contact Tom Smyth on 017722 865689.

**St Francis Hill Chapel  
Parish Newsletter**

The Hill, Horns Lane

Goosnargh, Preston PR3 2FJ

Telephone: 01772 865229

Clergy: Father Sony Joseph Kadamthodu

[www.stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk](http://www.stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk)

Email (for newsletter items only):

[news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk](mailto:news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk)

**In case of emergency (and unable to contact Father Sony) please ring  
Father Dutton on 01772 782641 or Canon Doyle on 01772 782244**

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT****29 November 2020 (Readings: Year B)*****Parish Mission Statement***

*Our Parish, guided by the example of our patron St Francis of Assisi, seeks to be a welcoming Catholic Community, by living, sharing and growing in faith. We strive to deepen our own relationship with Christ and meet the needs of others.*

**CHURCH IS OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER THIS SUNDAY**

Following the latest lockdown restrictions for Covid-19, re-introduced on 5 November, we can no longer celebrate Mass but will be open for private prayer every Sunday from 10.00 until 12.00. Please do follow all safety restrictions when in church. Stewards will be on hand to welcome and assist.

**Mass Today** is for the people of the parish.

**Daily Mass** live at 9.30am from St Clare's in Preston can be accessed on their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/StClaresChurch/>

## **BIDDING PRAYERS**

**Dear Lord, on this First Sunday in Advent, help us to welcome your son into our lives by striving for what is right and just in our world, especially through these difficult times. We ask for your help and guidance as we offer our prayers to you today.**

As we start Advent, we recall the message of today's gospel – you will come when we least expect you. Help us to welcome you now as we make a conscious effort to reach out to those who need support as we prepare to come out of lockdown. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all the scientists who have worked tirelessly to formulate vaccines. We give thanks for their knowledge and expertise and for all the people who have put themselves forward for trials to ensure our ongoing safety. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

In this last Sunday of November we remember members of our family and friends who are sadly no longer with us. May all those who grieve be comforted and may the prayers we offer for the souls of the faithful departed be heard by you – our loving and compassionate Lord. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**We give thanks for your never-ending presence in our lives. May your love and compassion be constantly with us as we face the week ahead, through Christ our Lord, Amen.**

## **FROM THE ARCHIVES**

Although the present nationwide lockdown will prevent us from attending Holy Mass in person on the first Sunday of Advent, the Advent Wreath, a very symbolic part of our long-standing Catholic tradition, will still be displayed in many of our parishes and lit for the first time. Whilst the actual origins of the tradition are uncertain, there is evidence of pre-Christian Germanic peoples using wreathes with lit candles during the cold and dark December days as a sign of hope in the future and the warm extended-sunlight days of spring. By the Middle Ages, Christians adapted this tradition and used Advent wreathes as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. Christ is 'the Light that came into the world' to dispel the darkness of sin and to radiate the truth and love of God (cf. John 3:19-21).

The evergreens used for the wreath itself are a reminder of continuous life. The shaping of them into a circle reinforces that meaning. The circle is also a sign of everlasting life as well as the eternity of God. The four outer candles, usually but not always, three purple and one pink, mark the four Sundays of Advent before Christmas Day. The purple candles are reminders that this should be a time of prayer and sacrifice to prepare us for the second coming of Christ. On the third Sunday, the pink candle is lit to announce *Gaudete* Sunday, a Sunday of rejoicing for Christ is coming near. Various meanings have been assigned to the four candles. One interpretation has each candle representing 4000 years, the Biblical time between Adam and Eve and the coming of Christ. In another interpretation, the first candle represents the patriarchs, the second the prophets, the third reminds us of John the Baptist, and the fourth of Mary, the mother of Jesus. They have also been described as the prophets' candle, the Bethlehem Candle, the shepherds' candle, and the angels' candle. A fifth white candle in the centre representing Christ can also be used. It is lit on Christmas Eve as a remembrance of Christ coming into the world. Sometimes, all the other candles of the wreath are removed and replaced with white candles on Christmas Eve. We pray that for the remaining weeks of advent the present restrictions will have ended, and we can once again gather to celebrate and attend Holy Mass. **Mike Bryan**

## **URGENT: PLEASE CONTACT YOUR MP**

The government is proposing to cut the UK aid budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP, even though the goal was included in the Conservative party's 2019 election manifesto. Almost 200 charities warned the plan would be a mistake when 115m people 'look set to be pushed back into extreme poverty because of the Covid-19 pandemic. A U-turn on your manifesto commitment would signal we are a nation willing to balance its books on the backs of the world's most marginalised people.'

Please email, text or tweet your MP **urgently** to tell them that the proposed cuts are unacceptable. This proposal has come with little warning, whilst people's minds are focused on lockdown, and is being finalised **now**. We cannot let them get away with a *fait accompli*. The message doesn't need to be long. Here's an example, sent to Ben Wallace (Secretary of State for Defence, hence the comment about destabilisation):

'I have been reading about the proposal to cut the UK aid budget. Please oppose this utterly shameful proposal. To cut the aid budget at the time when the poorest countries are under extra pressure because of COVID is wholly immoral. It is also likely to stir disaffection in those countries, increasing the risk of destabilisation. Let us have compassion for EVERYBODY affected by COVID, not just those in the UK.'

## READINGS

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

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**

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 17th 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?