

We celebrate the birth of Jesus in the middle of the night to acknowledge the other darkness in which we have to live. Only when we understand what darkness really is, can we appreciate the wonder and the beauty of the light that lit up the world when Jesus was born. Hope at last—a new start, a new beginning.

There was a moment in your life when your world actually stopped, and turned its attention to you, and people who loved you prayed for you and asked that you too could be like him, a light in the darkness. And someone held a lighted candle for you. Christmas is the time when, once again, you can own what that candle meant. A lighted candle has a lot to say to us: all the darkness in the world is so passive that it cannot even extinguish that tiny light.

No one seemed to notice when Christ was born; it remained silent—and then, as if to get things moving, an angel appears to shepherds sleeping in the next field. It was as if God looked around the world he had made and did not recognise it any more—it certainly did not recognise him. He could not be born into structures which make compromises with the ways of darkness: so he was born in an empty field: an empty place in which to make a new beginning.

His Mother tells you not to be afraid of the emptiness. She gave thanks that her own emptiness was blessed. She was filled so full that on this night she was able to present the world with its Saviour. A vocation as much ours as hers; we too can present our world with its Saviour by the very way we live in it, if we too allow our emptiness to be assured, allow the Spirit to fill us so full of this new way of being human: a way which insists on feeding hungry people, giving warmth and shelter to people who are cold and exposed, comforting lonely people, reassuring frightened people and becoming a tiny flickering flame of hope for those who have nothing but fear of the dark.

From all the friars to all of you a peaceful family Christmas. **Austin O.F.M.**

ST. ANTONY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL RECEPTION APPLICATIONS

The parish office requires completed Forms A & B, together with copy of child's baptism certificate and non-returnable family photo. Closing date is 15th January 2014.

CHRISTMAS CLEAN

It is the BIG clean of our church for Christmas on Monday, 23rd December at 10.30am. **PLEASE PLEASE** help if you can. Last year we had very few people to get the church done, with more help it will not be such a big job. Don't leave it to the few—just half an hour of your time would make a big difference. Hoping to see you there. Thank you.

Thursday, 10.30am 2nd Jan. Liz O'Toole, Mary Charter, Dianne Molloy, Dorothee Gabriel, Rowena Li.

PARISH OFFICE

Please note that the parish office will be closed on Christmas Eve. It will be open on Friday, 27th December 9.30am—1.30pm, 30th Dec & 31st December 9.30am—1.30pm. Closed 1st January open 2nd and 3rd January 9.30am—1.30pm.

The next newsletter after this weekend will be on Sunday, 5th January.

Your offerings at the Christmas Masses will be for the Community.

WELCOME

We welcome into the parish community Benjamin Daniel Kennedy, Beatrice Kelly, Rudy Jesper Henry Lawless and Beau Belle Winter who were baptised in St.



Thomas' last weekend.

CHRISTMAS MASSES AT ST. THOMAS'

The rotas for the Masses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for: Ministers of Communion, Readers, Ushers & Sacristans are displayed on the notice-board at the back of the church. We urgently need help in filling numerous "vacancies". We especially need help with the 10am on Christmas Day—out of the 14 people required to cover the various ministries, **only 1 person** has so far volunteered! If you can help with any of the Masses, please add your name to the list on the table at the back of the church.

IN TOUCH

The Christmas issue of In Touch, the parish magazine, is still on sale at all Masses this weekend price only £2.

LEGACY OFFICER

The Apostleship of the Sea is looking to appoint a Legacy Officer to join its team based in central London. The purpose of this role is to manage the charity's legacy programme to sustain the charity's work supporting seafarers. Applicants should have a minimum of two years' experience of working in legacy fundraising. This post is part time. For more information contact johngreen@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk. Applications close: 24th Jan 2014. Interviews 4th Feb. 2014.

ACCOMMODATION NEEDED

Family with 4 children seek rented accommodation within Redbridge area. Contact 07404511427 or 07955655726.

JOURNEY OF FAITH

Sessions for the Lenten and Easter term will recommence on Monday, 13th Jan. in the William Scott Room at 8pm.

CHRISTMAS EVE 24th December

St. Thomas' Mass 5pm preceded by carols at 4.30pm.

7pm Mass preceded by carols at 6.30pm.

11.15pm Carols leading into Midnight Mass.

Chigwell Convent

Please note new time:

8.45pm Carols leading into Mass at 9pm

CHRISTMAS DAY

St. Thomas' 8.30am, 10am and 11.30am.

St. James (URC) Buckhurst Hill 9am

Chigwell Convent 10am

THINKING DAY RAFFLE

Thank you for supporting us to raise money to celebrate our Thinking Day celebrations. The winners were:-

1st Prize Mrs Archibald Yellow 321-325

2nd Prize Mrs Guyatt Yellow 186-190

3rd Prize Helen Pink 181-185 (St. James)

4th Prize Aiden Badley Salmon 71-75 (Convent)

5th Prize Mrs Hunter 936-940

PARISH DIARIES 2014

We are pleased to announce that the Parish Diaries for 2014 have arrived! Please leave your donation in the basket provided at the back of the church.

WINTER WONDERLAND

At the Woodford Wells Club on Sunday, 22nd December 12.30pm Festive Stalls and a chance to meet Father Christmas.

2.30pm Enjoy the Christmas buffet lunch £10 per adult & £6 per child

3.30pm Celebrate with family and friends singing Christmas Carols in the hall.

Mulled wine and mince pies served till late.

For more information contact Natasha Argent 07904022966 or Sheree Campbell 07958031121.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

Sick:- Phil Archer, Ellen Armstrong, Mary Barnes, Alice Binder, Moira Bisset, Angela & Kerry Bromfield, Liz Channer, Chris Callow, Elsie Carey, Claire, David Clancy, Violet Clark, Sue Crail, Kathie Crowley, Chanelle Conway, Alan Cornish, Noreen Coyle, Kate Crowley, Mary Cullis, Siobhan Davids, Tomoko Dawson, Karen Davies, Donald Dourado, Mary Duffy, Francoise Duprey, Michael Durcan, Harold Elston, Alan Farmer, Ray Finney, Fr. Jim Fitzpatrick, Irene & Carter de Freitas, Nora Gaiger, Martin Garnar, Judy & John Gilmartin, Kathleen Gissane, Stephen Grave, Joan Green, Pat Greene, Amelia Halfyard, Doris Harriss, Rowland Hill, Veronica Hutchison, Stephen Jannece, Derek Jones, Laura Kennedy, Fr. Austin Kinsella O.F.M., Jacqui Lebaz, Lauren, Daniel Lucey, Fr. Austin McCormack O.F.M., Dennis McMullen, Mary McKay, Anne McShea, James McTierwal, Ron Mallett, Hannah Martin, Paul Mason, Sadie Meade, Jutta Menzies, Kathleen Meyler, Pat Meyler, Jean Morgan. Maureen Noden, Anthony O'Boyle, Mary O'Boyle, Joanne O'Boyle, Mary O'Connor, Eily O'Donoghue, Katie O'Neil, Lucy Owen, Georgia Perera, Lily Reding, Mark Pateman, Anneli Prowse, Jacky Rott, Ann Rowley, Sandra Sifflett, Debbie Smythe, Karen Spencer, Carmel Sweeney, Mary Sullivan, Mary Taylor, Alfi Thompson, Eileen Vallely, Terry Wauer, Monica Worsfold.

SUNDAY MASSES

St. Thomas'

1st Mass Sat. 6pm; 8.30am;
10am (Children's Liturgy)
11.30am

Chigwell Convent

10am

St. James URC

(Buckhurst Hill)

9am (Children's Liturgy)

WEEKDAY MASSES

St. Thomas'

10am

Chigwell Convent

9.30am

Saturday 10am

(1st Weds of the month)

No morning Mass

Trinity High School

8.20am on Lower Site.

SATURDAY

CONFESSIONS

St. Thomas'

10.30am—11.30am

5.00pm—5.45pm

Chigwell Convent

After 10am Mass

BAPTISMS

1st and 3rd Sundays

Of the month

Lately Dead:- William Black, Roger Higgins, Craig Lobo, Garry Munday.

Craig's Requiem will take place on Monday, 30th December at 10.00am in St. Thomas'. **May he rest in peace.**

Please remember in your prayers the Lobo family in this time of great sorrow.

Anniv: Joseph Dias, Vincent Dias, Chevonne Lobo, Mary O'Sullivan.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE RAFFLE PRIZES

Green 276-280

Green 366-370

Please collect from parish office.

ECUMENICAL ADVENT SERVICE

Many thanks to those who supported the service and particularly to the readers, the choirs and the CWL. The retiring collection raised £840 which has been divided between Redbridge old Weather Centre and Mary's Meals, feeding school children in Haiti. Thank you for your generous response.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Louisa & Julius Estanislao who celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary this weekend.

St Thomas of Canterbury

557/559 High Road, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 0RB

Served by the Franciscans



A FAIRTRADE PARISH



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4TH SUNDAY IN ADVENT CYCLE A

22ND DECEMBER 2013



In these days before Christmas we rejoice together in hope as we become especially aware that Christ is present in our lives and in our world.

First Reading (Isaiah 7:10-14)

The prophecy in this reading from Isaiah speaks of the intervention of God in human history. A child will be born, called Emmanuel, which means "God is with us".

Second Reading (Romans 1:1-7)

Salvation is offered through Christ Jesus, the Son of God, whose coming into the world is good news.

Gospel (Matthew 1:18-24)

This is the fulfilment of the prophecy given in the first reading, telling the story of Mary conceiving a child through the Holy Spirit and giving birth to a son named Emmanuel.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Let the Lord enter! He is the king of glory*

There will be an SVP Collection after all Masses this weekend.