



**THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH
AND DWELT AMONG US!
ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!**

The Word This Week

Here we enter a new stage of Advent: having spent so much time on the Second Coming, now we look back, to remember the details of the Lord's First Coming. Today we focus on the characters of Mary and Joseph, and hear of the circumstances surrounding the conception of the child Jesus, and the reaction of Joseph. This mystery springs from the House of David, and so we lead into the Gospel by hearing of the promise that the Messiah would come from that line. The link between the First Reading and the Gospel is quite explicit today, since Matthew actually quotes Isaiah. Joseph, descendant of King David, is invited to take his place in the great story of God's relationship with the Chosen people. There is great sense of a timeless mystery reaching its focal point, as that which was "promised long ago" (Second Reading) now takes flesh in the womb of Mary.

Christmas Flowers

If anyone wishes to donate to the cost of flowers for Christmas in memory of a loved one, please place your donation in an envelope marked "Christmas Flowers" and hand it in or post it through the Presbytery letterbox before the end of this **Sunday 21st December**. Names of those to be remembered will be displayed in Church.

Church Decorating

Help is needed after 11.00 a.m. Mass **this Sunday** to get the big trees up in Church—it's a heavy lifting job, so anyone who can stay behind or pop back will be very welcome! We'll be doing all our Church Christmas decorations on **Tuesday 23rd December**, straight after the 9.30 a.m. Mass, - decorating the trees and arranging the crib, so everyone is very welcome! Also this Sunday there are some festive refreshments after

the 11.00 a.m. Mass with musical entertainment, raising money for Springhill Hospice. Do pop in!

S.V.P. Epiphany Party

Our Parish SVP is hosting the traditional Epiphany Party on **Sunday 11th January** next year from 2.00 – 5.00 p.m.: everyone is welcome but for catering purposes please fill in and return an "RSVP" card—these are available in the porch. For more information please contact Joan on **0773 990 8561**.

Crib Offerings

This year our crib offerings will be added to our Appeal for the work of Friends of the Holy Land. Especially as our minds and hearts turn towards Bethlehem 2000 years ago, let us not forget our Christian brothers and sisters struggling in that little town today! Thank you for your donations so far.

Next Sunday's Gospel

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

When the Magi had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.' But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.' And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

A Christmas Word from Father James

It was only when I was coming to write this little Christmas message and checking back on previous years that I saw I had always signed it “Father James and Arthur”. As you know, I lost my dog Arthur earlier this year, and inevitably feel the loss at this time. How much more people who have lost loved ones in the past year, and face an empty place at the Christmas table for the first time! If you are in that position it’s easy to feel “excluded” from the joy and jollity all around—easy to think “I won’t bother with Christmas this year.” We can feel the same as we contemplate our world, which seems to see more and more divisions and conflicts and hatred—“What’s the point of Christmas”, we think. And yet this misses the point. Christ was born into a messy world in a messy way: finding temporary lodging in an farm shelter, having to flee the violence of King Herod as an innocent baby—and other innocents did not survive. But this is the real point of this feast: the joy of Christmas is not avoiding heartache or pain, but seeing that our God wants to be close to us in it. With God we are never alone, in our grief or fear or isolation or sadness: God-is-with-us: Emmanuel. So please find consolation, joy and hope in this little babe, who comes to be with us in all that this world brings, so that he can carry us triumphantly—and joyfully—into eternity!

May the companionship of Christ be in your hearts and homes this Christmas and all through the New Year, whether you are alone or with family and friends, whether you are happy or sad. With prayers and blessings for a joyful and holy Christmas,

Father James



This Week

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT AND BEGINNING OF CHRISTMAS OCTAVE

Monday 22nd December Advent II weekday

1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56

9.30 a.m. MASS

6.00 p.m. Confessions until 7.00 p.m.

Tuesday 23rd December Advent II Weekday

Malachi 3:1-4, 4:5-6; Luke 1:57-66

9.30 a.m. MASS

Followed by Decorating Church

Wednesday 24th December Advent II Weekday

2 Samuel 7:1-5.8b-12.14a.16; Luke 1:67-79

6.30 p.m. The First MASS of Christmas

Thursday 25th December

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (Solemnity)

Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

9.00 a.m. MASS of the Shepherds

11.00 a.m. MASS of Christmas Day

Friday 26th December

Saint Stephen, The First Martyr (Feast)

Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22

11.00 a.m. MASS

Saturday 27th December

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist (Feast)

1 John 1:1-4; John 20:2-8

11.00 a.m. MASS

6.30 p.m. First MASS of Sunday

Sunday 28th December

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Sirach 3:2-6.12-17a; Coloss 3:12-21; Luke 2:41-52

9.00 a.m. MASS Refreshments afterwards

11.00 a.m. MASS Refreshments afterwards