**St Columba’s Church, Selsdon**

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**13 DECEMBER 2020**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**(YEAR B)**

**THIS SUNDAY’S MASS READINGS**

**Entrance Antiphon:** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

**1st Reading from the prophet Isaiah: 61:1-2. 10-11**

**Responsorial Psalm Ps Lk 1:46-50. 53-54. RIs 61:10:** My soul rejoices in my God.

**2nd Reading: from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians: 5:16-24**

**Gospel Acclamation:** Alleluia, alleluia! The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Alleluia!

**Gospel: John: 1:6-8. 19-28**

**Communion Antiphon:** Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

**CHRISTMAS MASSES: YOU NEED TO BOOK IN ADVANCE**

Christmas Masses will go ahead as usual but with no carol singing and less seating than in previous years. Because of Covid-19 a maximum of 90 people are allowed in church. So it will be necessary to book your places in advance.

To make sure no one misses out, there will be two additional Masses, making six in total. Times are as follows. Christmas Eve: 5pm, 7.30pm and midnight.

Christmas Day: 8am, 9.30am and 11am.

To book your places email selsdon@rcaos.org.uk giving your name, phone number and the total number attending including any children

Alternatively, telephone 020 8657 3747 and leave a message with the same information. Either way there is no need then to fill out a form when you arrive at the church).

**WHY WE MUST LEARN TO SAY ‘NO!’ TO THE WORLD’S VALUES**

**A REFLECTION ON THE READINGS FOR GAUDETE SUNDAY, THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, BY FR ROY**

On this, Gaudete Sunday, the half way point in Advent, we are called to rejoice at the news that the saviour is definitely coming.

We see in today’s Gospel how John the Baptist eagerly turns his whole attention towards Jesus. John makes it clear that he is not the prophesied messiah. He recognises Jesus as the true messiah.

Humbly, John declares himself unworthy even to undo the strap of Jesus’s sandals.

The Jewish authorities initially suspected that John was the expected messiah.

Seeking his own confirmation, John sends a message to Jesus asking him if he is indeed the messiah.

Jesus does not provide a direct answer to the question but instead quotes a text from Isaiah that the blind are able to see, the lame to walk, lepers are cleansed and, most importantly, the good news is being preached to the poor.

In effect, Jesus directs the attention of John to the concrete events happening all around him. Jesus is not just a miracle worker but also an evangelist because the word of God is indeed being preached to the poor.

In other words, preaching the word of God is essential to Jesus’s ministry.

Healing is integrated into that primary mission of proclaiming God to the people. Acceptance of the word of God fulfils the agenda of redemption.

The Gospel as a whole is a summary of Jesus’s work, at the heart of which is forgiveness of sins. The greatest suffering man can experience is alienation from God.

The physical defects of any human person are metaphors for the alienation of people from God. Human defects manifest that separation.

In this regard, note the words of Jesus after a healing is performed: “Go and sin no more”.

What exactly is this good news that is proclaimed to the poor?

It is the consolation that God provides to those most in need. They may be poor in the eyes of the world but they are favoured by God.

When people accept the word of Jesus each becomes a new person, reborn in eternity in the kingdom of the Father in heaven.

In other words, acceptance of Jesus’s word signifies rebirth in God’s kingdom.

Mankind is only reconciled with God by acceptance of Jesus.

The dichotomy is overcome because man is reunited with God.

Blindness is one classic image for sin. Disease as identified in the Bible is another.

The ultimate biblical symbol of sin, however, is death.

For ages mankind was punished by death because of our stubbornness.

Mankind continues to be stifled by sin but Jesus has broken the dominance that sin used to have over us.

John acknowledges that; acknowledges that the messiah is capable of breaking the cycle of sin. We need to recognise that reality in God’s plan.

John, who denied himself all forms of pleasure, shows us the way.

Like him, we must learn how to say ‘No!’ to the world’s values.

**CHURCH TOILETS: NOW OPEN AGAIN**

Up until now, the toilets at St Columba’s have been closed on the instructions of the Government. Along with all the other restrictions like using hand sanitiser, wearing face masks and providing notification that you were coming to church, that was one of the pre-conditions they laid down for allowing churches to reopen after the first Covid-19 lockdown.

We have just heard from Archbishops House that toilets at church can now be reopened on condition that they are thoroughly cleaned after use to avoid any possible spread of Covid-19.

There will now be notices in the toilets to this effect along with spray bottles of cleanser and kitchen rolls. Please make sure to spray and wipe over any surfaces you touch – including door handles and taps – when visiting the toilets. Thank you for your cooperation.

***10 COMMANDMENTS FOR COMING TO CHURCH…***

Don’t forget, whether coming to Mass or to Tuesday Adoration, that we must all comply with the following ‘Ten Commandments’:

1. Remember to bring and wear a face mask.
2. Enter the church via the side door leading into the Sacred Heart chapel/confessional, observe the one-way system and leave via the centre back door.
3. Provide a written note – and this applies every time you come to church for whatever reason – of your name and contact details (phone number or email or postal address) plus the date and, if relevant, Mass time. To save queuing and filling out a form, why not send an email to selsdon@rcaos.org.uk?
4. Use hand sanitizer, provided, both when entering and leaving the church.
5. Do not move the chairs which have replaced our benches and are at 1m intervals to ensure the necessary social distancing.
6. Don’t expect to find Mass or prayer books or any other shared items: bring your own. That applies to readers as well.
7. Remember that singing is not allowed.
8. Don’t forget that Holy Communion is silent.
9. Before leaving the church (i.e. before you come up to receive Holy Communion), turn your chair back to front so that the stewards know which ones to clean afterwards.
10. Unless staying for Adoration, on Tuesdays, leave the church straight after Holy Communion and don’t congregate in the car park.

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| **LITURGICAL CALENDAR OF THE WEEK** |
| Sat 12th  | Weekday of Advent, Our Lady of Guadalupe |
| Sun 13th  | 3rd Sunday of Advent  |
| Mon 14th  | St John of the Cross, Priest, Doctor of the Church |
| Tues 15th  | Weekday of Advent |
| Wed 16th  | Weekday of Advent |
| Thurs 17th  | Weekday of Advent |
| Fri 18th | Weekday of Advent |
| Sat 19th  | Weekday of Advent |
| Sun 20th  | 4th Sunday of Advent |

**REMEMBER THE SICK AND NEEDY**

Please pray for all those in great need at this time including: Julie Ballesteros Canon Frank O’Sullivan, Cora Litchfield, Sean Walsh, Lily Wei, Judy Freegard, Elena Sandland, Imogen Fernando, Joan Charman, Roger Fenton, Joan Cunningham, John Davis, Noreen Lawlor, Solveya La Marina, Chris Jones, Maria Reece, Margaret Bolton, Eddie Aldridge, Ellis Warburton, Mary Marks, Jean-Claude Anthony, Ellen Everett, Maureen Coffey, Albert Khayyat, James Patrick Guckian, Elizabeth Sensano, Margit Symons, Stephen Beck and sick residents at the four residential homes usually, in better times, visited by the parish St Vincent de Paul group.

**THE PHILIPPINES: IT’S ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER – CAN YOU HELP..?**

There have been a number of typhoons and cyclones in the Philippines this year. And in recent weeks it is my home island which has been worst affected, with well over 50 people killed, dozens injured and missing and huge numbers left homeless.

The flooding has been extensive, several churches have been destroyed and a huge proportion of homes have been raized to the ground. With the agreement of Archbishop John, I am launching an appeal for the victims and myself donating money received to celebrate my 25th anniversary of ordination last month. If you too can help, please contact me. And remember the many victims in your prayers. – Fr Roy

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| **MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK** |
| Sat 12th  | 6.30pm | Colleen Hiett, RIP |
| Sun 13th  | 8.00am | Thanksgiving for & blessings on St Columba’s 'Covid Helpers' |
| Sun 13th  | 10.00am | Pro Populo |
| Sun 13th  | 6.30pm | Pat Delaney, wellbeing |
| Mon 14th  | 10.00am | Chea Lim, wellbeing |
| Tues 15th  | 10.00am | Angela’s private intention |
| Wed 16th  | 10.00am | Father Roy’s 50th Birthday |
| Thurs 17th  | 10.00am | Hayat Dayani, wellbeing |
| Fri 18th | 10.00am | Maria Alvarez, RIP |
| Sat 19th  |  6.30pm | Holy Souls |
| Sun 20th  |  8.00am | Bruno Sampson, RIP |
| Sun 20th  | 10.00am | Pro Populo |
| Sun 20th  | 6.30pm | Kevin Barrett, RIP |

**GIFT AID ENVELOPES**

We have not been able to distribute new Gift Aid envelopes because of the coronavirus.

There is a way round that, however, to ensure that St Columba’s continues to benefit from Gift Aid which adds an extra 25p to parish income for every pound that you give to the Offertory collection.

 All you need to do is to put your offering in any blank envelope on which you then write ‘Gift Aid’ plus your name. Then place that envelope in the Offertory collection box/basket at church. Better still, set up a standing order. (See ‘Make A Pledge For Our Parish’.)

**MAKE A PLEDGE FOR OUR PARISH**

The dramatic fall in the numbers attending Mass during the pandemic has, not surprisingly, had a knock-on effect on parish finances. With significantly fewer people at Mass on Sunday, the Offertory collection is much reduced.

But regular parish bills still have to be paid and the amount of money available from the Offertory collection to do so is now much less than it was a year ago, before the pandemic.

So, to ensure the future financial wellbeing of St Columba's, we are asking all parishioners to review their offerings to support the work and mission of the parish. This, of course, is in the light of the fifth commandment of the Church which is 'To contribute to the support of our pastors.'

There are various ways of giving, whether you are coming to church or not. As well as cash in the basket at Mass, they include payment by cheque and standing order. For taxpayers, there is also the option of signing up for Gift Aid which boosts your offering by 25p for every £1 you pay - and at no extra cost to yourself.

Below is a form inviting you to make a pledge of support for St Columba's and which also sets out all the options. It includes a standing order form.

Do give some thought to this: we all need our church, we all need to support the work and mission of the parish - and we all need to take responsibility for supporting St Columba's financially.

 



***SHOP ONLINE AND HELP ST C’S AT NO EXTRA COST TO YOURSELF***

Thinking of buying something online? Anything? A new washing machine or fridge or freezer or tumble dryer or any other white goods?

Or perhaps you need a new vacuum cleaner or intend ordering a book or dvd or, in fact, other items.

If you do it online you can help St Columba’s finances, depleted by the lockdown, at the same time and at no cost to yourself. More and more parishioners are signing up for this scheme. It means that you can turn your everyday online shopping into free donations to our parish. It’s simple. It’s straightforward. And it will cost you nothing. All you have to do is to logon to the following website [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk), register (which is quick and easy) and then go shopping online at whichever retailer you choose. Each time you buy something – anything – a small donation is made to St Columba’s.

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| There are more than 4,000 retailers to choose from including lots of big names such as Argos, John Lewis, Amazon, M&S and Sainsbury’s. Have a look at this link to find out more: [https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stcolumbasldn/?invite=ZTUSO0%26referral-campaign=c2s%26utm\_campaign=admin-trigger%26utm\_content=nst](http://t.e.easyfundraising.org.uk/r/?id=h2ef6bab4,257a256b,25302fff&utm_source=adobecampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=referral-2018&utm_content=trigger-supp-referee-raised-2018&origin=RTNS2&p1=stcolumbasldn&p2=ZTUSO0)  |  |  |

**NEW YEAR NEWS FROM THE UCM**

Our next Union of Catholic Mothers meeting will be on Wednesday 6th January 2021 when we will play Bingo on Zoom - let Anne Rodrigues know if you would like to take part.

Please also see the parish website for a further UCM news update.

**MAKE YOUR OFFERING GO FURTHER**

If you are a taxpayer and not already signed up for Gift Aid (which, at no cost to you, enables St Columba’s to reclaim from the Government tax you have already paid on the money you put in the Offertory collection) contact Fr Roy or Deacon Philip for details of how to join the scheme.

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**SIGN UP FOR DAILY ADVENT REFLECTIONS TO PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS**

This is an Advent season like no other, leading up to a Christmas celebration that may be different from those we are used to.

To help focus your daily prayer the Southwark Diocesan Spirituality Commission is offering a brief reflection on one of the readings of the day, delivered by email for personal use at a time to suit you.
At the end of this challenging year the weeks may feel even darker than usual.

However, this presents an opportunity to discover Advent in a new and deeper way: waiting for a light to grow in the darkness, longing for the coming of our Lord, and of God’s Kingdom.

Maybe this is a time to embrace the darkness and the loneliness and allow them to open us up to a deeper longing as we wait.  [Sign up here](https://rcsouthwark.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a40ab1a35eac7236d856fe882&id=8ef73c8076&e=087693309e)  for the Advent Reflections or visit [https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/advent](https://rcsouthwark.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a40ab1a35eac7236d856fe882&id=6c840687d8&e=087693309e)

**TO GO AHEAD WITH CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES WE NEED MORE STEWARDS**

As already reported, because of seating restrictions forced on us by Covid-19 we plan to have three Masses on Christmas Day morning instead of the usual two: 8am, 9.30am and 11am.

That way we should be able to accommodate everyone who wishes to come to Mass then.

But that will only happen if we have enough stewards. We need two at each Mass.

They are needed to monitor numbers, check people in and help clean the seats afterwards.

At the moment we don’t have enough volunteers. So would YOU please consider volunteering to help out as a steward on Christmas Day morning?

Let Deacon Philip know if you are willing to help.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR OFFERING**

The Offertory collection over the period from November 8 to date amounted to £844 in total. Of that, £344 was Gift Aided and £500 not (this latter figure was a single donation towards the running costs of the church).

**LOOKING FOR PEACE AND HOPE…?**
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 online resources and events which can help. Try  [A journey to the Manger](https://rcsouthwark.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a40ab1a35eac7236d856fe882&id=c9935d5365&e=087693309e):gentle prayers on Sunday night during Advent.  This is an opportunity for Catholics to come together online to pray and reflect as we prepare for the coming of our Lord
CAFOD also offers a number of different versions of their virtual [Advent Calendar](https://rcsouthwark.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a40ab1a35eac7236d856fe882&id=8bbfa3ac72&e=087693309e) for all ages, with prayers and reflections for each day of the season.
For general information about the agency and for ways of supporting it visit [cafod.org.uk/parishes](https://rcsouthwark.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a40ab1a35eac7236d856fe882&id=0f4501ac35&e=087693309e).

**THE NEWSLETTER: WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Comments, suggestions, contributions: all are welcome. Items for publication should be emailed to kyrabarone@aol.com by Thursday evening at the latest.