**St Columba’s Church, Selsdon**

37 Queenhill Road, Selsdon, South Croydon, CR2 8DW

Parish telephone number: 020 8657 3747

Parish Priest: Father Roy Tablizo

E: selsdon@rcaos.org.uk

Deacon: Rev. Philip Pond E: philippond@rcaos.org.uk

T: 07764 845 890

Parish website: [www.stcolumbaschurchselsdon.uk](http://www.stcolumbaschurchselsdon.uk)

**20 DECEMBER 2020**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**(YEAR B)**

**THIS SUNDAY’S MASS READINGS**

**Entrance Antiphon:** Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a saviour.

**1st Reading from the second book of Samuel: 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16.**

**Responsorial Psalm Ps 88:2-5. 27. 29. Rcf.v2:** I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

**2nd Reading: from the letter of St Paul to the Romans: 16:25-27**

**Gospel Acclamation:** Alleluia, alleluia! I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me. Alleluia!

**Gospel: Luke: 1:26-38**

**Communion Antiphon:** Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.

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

Because of Covid-19 a maximum of 90 people are allowed in church. So it will be necessary to book your places at Christmas Masses in advance.

Times are as follows. Christmas Eve: 5pm (***that Mass is*** ***already fully booked***), 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.

**THE QUESTION TO ASK IN THE RUN-UP TO CHRISTMAS**

**A REFLECTION ON THIS SUNDAY’S GOSPEL BY DEACON PHILIP**

I would like to start my homily by asking you a question. What would be your reaction to the news of a teenager perhaps 15 or 16 years old, maybe even younger, becoming pregnant?

What if it was a young woman in your own family…? Your own daughter perhaps…?

Even in these permissive times there would for most people, I’m sure, be a sense of shock at such news.

And what about the young woman herself? How would she react?

It is just such a scenario that we hear about in this Sunday’s Gospel. The young woman is course Mary.

We are so familiar with the story of Jesus’s conception and birth that it’s easy to forget or overlook the human aspect of what we know as the Annunciation.

This Sunday’s Gospel reminds us. It reminds us of what happened…

How the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, totally out of the blue.

How he announced to her that she was to have a baby.

How that baby would be called Son of the Most High.

How he would be a king who would rule for ever.

Indeed, how he would be God.

That, by anyone’s standards, would be – was – shocking. Not surprisingly Mary was flabbergasted, to put it mildly. ‘Deeply disturbed’ as Luke’s Gospel puts it today.

And yet she accepted the angel Gabriel’s message. Or rather, despite everything, despite the mind-boggling implications of that message, despite her oh-so-understandable doubts and fears – she accepted God’s will for her.

Because that is what Gabriel was asking. God himself wanted Mary to bear his own son. Even though she wasn’t married. Even though she was a virgin.

And she said yes. Just think about that; about her reactions; about her perspective on all this.

Putting aside the staggering implications, how on earth was she going to tell her fiancé, Joseph, never mind her parents and family?

Even though marriage and child bearing at such an early age were customary in those days, it must have seemed impossible to her.

And yet it was possible, it was practical. And it all came to pass, exactly as the angel Gabriel had foretold.

Because it was God’s will and because Mary accepted God’s will. She said yes. She could have said no.

But despite all her considerable doubts and fears, she decided to place all her trust in Him.

So, 2,000 years later, what are the lessons for us here today at St Columba’s? What can we learn from Mary’s saying ‘yes’?

How open are we to listening to God’s voice, expressed in so many different ways – in events, in persons, in things around us?

Although we may take what Mary did very much for granted – it’s such a familiar story – the main lesson to be learned from her is profound and far reaching.

Mary shows us the way. She shows us how to listen to the word of God. And, perhaps most importantly, she shows us how to accept it.

Although Mary was frightened, although she didn’t understand what was going on, she was prepared to accept God’s will. And to answer God’s call with obedience, with docility, with faith and with trust.

The question for each of us here and now is: are we? Are you?

Because the truth is that God calls all of us in just the same way that he called Mary.

As was made clear at our baptism, all of us are chosen and called by God.

He has a role for each and every one of us – if, like Mary, we are prepared to say yes.

He waits for our choice, the choice that puts our freedom at his service.

And then, like Mary, if we believe and obey God’s word, we too can conceive Christ – spiritually – and make him present in the world.

**COME AND SEE US ONLINE**

Make a note of the day and time: Sunday (December 20) at 3.30pm.

That's when you can see us (Fr Roy and Deacon Philip) taking part in an online Christmas carol service.

It has been organised by Churches Together in Selsdon & Addington, of which St Columba's is an active member.

Where can you view it? Simply Google "Facebook Churches Together in Selsdon & Addington".

Don't miss it: lots of local people have worked hard to put this event together including a virtual adult choir and a virtual kids choir.

Not to be missed: enjoy!

***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.

**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.

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| **LITURGICAL CALENDAR OF THE WEEK** |
| Sat 19th  | Weekday of Advent |
| Sun 20th  | 4th Sunday of Advent  |
| Mon 21st  | Weekday of Advent, St Peter Canisius, Priest, Doctor of the Church |
| Tues 22nd  | Weekday of Advent |
| Wed 23rd  | Weekday of Advent, St John of Kanty, Priest |
| Thurs 24th  | Weekday of Advent |
| Fri 25th | The Nativity of the Lord |
| Sat 26th  | St Stephen, the first martyr |
| Sun 27th  | The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph |

**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.

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| **MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK** |
| 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 |
| Mon 21st  | 10.00am | C. K. Mathew, RIP |
| Tues 22nd  | 10.00am | Benedict Okafor, RIP |
| Wed 23rd  | 10.00am | Benedict Okafor, RIP |
| Thurs 24th  | 5.00pm | Benedict Okafor, RIP |
| Thurs 24th  | 7.30pm | Holy Souls |
| Fri 25th | Midnight | Pro Populo |
| Fri 25th | 8.00am | Angela’s Private Intention |
| Fri 25th | 9.30am | John Power, RIP |
| Fri 25th  | 11.00am | Benedict Okafor, RIP |
| Sat 26th  |  6.30pm | Laura Harseedt, RIP |
| Sun 27th  |  8.00am | Angela’s Private Intention |
| Sun 27th  | 10.00am | Pro Populo |
| Sun 27th  | 6.30pm | Intention of the Alvarez Family |

**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

**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. 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 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)  |  |  |

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

Because of Covid-19 seating restrictions, 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 three 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.

**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.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR OFFERING**

The Offertory collection for December 6 amounted to £852.37 in total of which £460 was Gift Aided and £392.37 not. The Offertory collection for December 13 amounted to £360 in total of which £150 was Gift Aided and £210 not. Thank you one and all.

**CHRISTMAS OFFERTORY COLLECTION**

Don’t forget that the Offertory collection at Christmas Masses is your personal gift to Fr Roy, one of only two occasions in the year when that applies (Easter is the other one.) This is your opportunity to say ‘thank you’ to Fr Roy for all his good work.

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

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