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Tuesday: 1 - 3.30pm Thursday: 1 - 3.30pm Friday: 2 - 4pm

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**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Special Christmas message from Fr Thomas:**

**The real meaning of Christmas is that God, who is our source of hope, has 'come among us and God is with us'. Jesus came, He comes and will come to be involved in our humanity and our world. Christmas is the ongoing life of God with His people. Christmas is also about our being connected to one another. May God bless us all with a happy, holy and safe Christmas.**

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**2 Samuel 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14-16**

**Romans 16: 25-27**

**Luke 1: 26-38**

As we light the last Advent candle we need to make our final preparations to the coming of Jesus this Christmas. In the first reading the prophets continue to dominate the Advent readings. Isaiah is replaced by Samuel and he tells as the Lord speaks to David through the prophet Nathan, not, as with Moses, directly. God responds to David's desire to build a Temple, recounting His support and promising a lasting dynasty establishing a peaceful kingdom and an everlasting throne.

In the second reading Paul states that the revelation of Jesus Christ must be broadcast everywhere to bring all to embrace the Christian faith. This should shape our missionary impulse and encourage us to be a witness and good example to those we meet. Paul also states that the gospel message is exactly what the prophets predicted in the Hebrew Bible.

The gospel relates how the angel Gabriel, sent by God, greeted the early teenage Mary in Nazareth proclaiming how she would conceive Jesus, the Son of the Most High. Troubled Mary wondered how, being a virgin. Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit's role and mentioned Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy. Affirming God's power, Mary humbly accepted, declaring herself the Lord's servant. Are we prepared to take Jesus into our lives with such unconditional acceptance? Malcolm.

Mass times	Feast Days
<b>6pm: Confessions</b> <b>6.30pm Vigil Mass</b> <b>Diana Stimson</b> <b>RIP</b>	<b>Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> St Thorlac</b> Born in 1133 in southern Iceland. Ordained a deacon before the age of 15 and a priest age 19. He studied in Paris and learned the <i>Rule of St Augustine</i> . Then went to England from 1153 to 1159 in Lincoln and studied canon law. Returned to Iceland and founded a monastery after refusing to marry a rich widow. Many Icelandic priests were married at that time. In 1174 was made Bishop of Skalholt. Regulated Augustine practice in Iceland. Carried out reforms including improving clerical practices and eradicating simony and lay patronage. He was more popular with the people than those in authority and cared for the poor and vulnerable and was firm yet patient administering justice. Conflicted with the chieftains who wanted to choose their priests who they treated as servants. Died 23 <sup>rd</sup> December 1193. Pope John Paul II canonised him in 1984. <i>The Saga of Saint Thorlak</i> was republished on pope's visit to Iceland in 1989. Iceland's patron saint.
<b>9.30 am Mass</b> <b>8 pm Vigil Mass</b>	<b>Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December</b> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fourth Sunday of Advent</b></p>
<b>9.30 am Mass</b>	<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day. Nativity of the Lord</b> The actual date and year of the birth of Jesus is unknown. Of the four gospels only Luke and Matthew tell stories of the birth and childhood of Jesus. In Luke's gospel Emperor Augustus called for a census so Joseph has to travel 150 km from Nazareth to Bethlehem with a pregnant Mary. This almost certainly would have been in the summer for ease of movement and the fact that the sheep were outside with the shepherds at the birth supports this theory. Jesus was born at the time of Herod the Great but he died in 4BC by our present day calendar. This makes the birth of Jesus between 7BC and 4BC.
<b>10 am Mass</b>	<b>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> Boxing Day St Stephen</b> The first deacon in the Church chosen by the Apostles of the seven deacons in Rome. He was a man of faith and of the Holy Spirit and was an amazing orator who preached with great wisdom and energy with "a face like an angel" as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. He converted many to Christianity. Thought a danger by the Jewish authorities. They arranged a hostile crowd to oppose his teaching and despite a stirring speech, the crowd attacked him and stoned him to death. The person who held the coats of his assailants was Saul, later to be converted as St Paul. Stephen was the first martyr of the Christian Church.

<b>6.30 pm Mass</b>	<b>Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> St John the Evangelist</b> Born in Galilee the son of Zebedee and brother of St James the Great. He was a fisherman on Lake Galilee until he was called by Jesus to be an apostle. He is the author of the fourth gospel and also wrote three canonical letters. In his gospel he is usually identified with " <i>the disciple whom Jesus loved</i> ". By tradition he was based at Ephesus after the Resurrection and died there of natural causes. One legend in the Middle Ages was that he survived being boiled in oil in Rome before his exile to Patmos in Greece				
<b>10 am Mass</b>	<b>Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> The Holy Innocents</b> Herod the Great was King of Judea at the time of the birth of Jesus. He heard that the 3 Wise Men, kings from the east, had followed a star as it indicated the birth of an important person. Herod was troubled and called the chief priests and learnt that they had finished in the area of Bethlehem. To protect his position and those of his ancestors he ordered that all children under two years old in the vicinity of Bethlehem be killed.				
<b>NO MASS</b>	<b>Friday 29<sup>th</sup> St Thomas Becket of Canterbury</b> Born in 1118 in London. His father was a Norman merchant. He studied in Paris. Returned to England and worked as a clerk. Then entered the service of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury who made him his archdeacon in 1154. He was a close friend of King Henry II, who made him Royal Chancellor in 1155 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. Previously lived a rather worldly life, but now he concentrated on his pastoral duties and insisted on the independence of the Church from the jurisdiction of the Crown. He went into exile in 1164, returned in 1170, and was assassinated in Canterbury Cathedral that year by four royal knights who thought they were acting on the king's wishes. Canonised in 1173. Tomb became one of the main pilgrimage shrines in western Christendom until its destruction by King Henry VIII.				
<b>6pm: Confessions 6.30pm Vigil Mass Maureen and Michael Duggan RIP</b>	<b>Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> St Egwin</b> An Anglo-Saxon born in about 660, a descendant of the Mercian kings in central England. He became a monk in his youth. Appointed Bishop of Worcester in 692. With his zeal, the severity of opposing evil and his reforms he incurred the hostility of some in his diocese. He went on a penitential pilgrimage to Rome to answer to the pope for complaints that had been made against him. He returned to England and was more forgiving. With the help of King Ethelred of Mercia he founded the famous Abbey of Evesham in the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He then undertook another pilgrimage to Rome in the company of King Conrad of Mercia and King Offa of the East Saxons. He obtained considerable privileges for his foundation from Pope Constantine. Bishop Egwin died on 30 <sup>th</sup> December 717 and was buried in the monastery at Evesham. Evesham Abbey became one of the great Benedictine houses of medieval England.				
<b>9.30 am Mass</b>	<b>Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph 2 hours of Adoration from 9 pm to 11 pm</b>				
<b>PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK CAPITALS WHEN RECORDING NAMES FOR MASS INTENTION</b>					
<b>Your prayers are needed for the following people</b>					
Sue Chandler	Hazel Sale	Joe Heatley			

### NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENT

**The collection for the two Christmas Masses is our special gift to Fr Thomas.**

This is our chance to show our appreciation of our new parish priest Fr Thomas for his dedication, guidance and care. Please give generously in support of his vocation and mission this Christmas.

**Mass times over Christmas and New Year**

**Christmas Eve Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December: 9.30 am Sunday morning Mass. 8 pm Christmas Vigil Mass**

**Christmas Day Monday 25<sup>th</sup> December: 9.30 am morning Mass**

**Boxing Day, Feast of St Stephen, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> December: 10 am morning Mass**

**New Year Eve Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December; 9.30 am morning Mass to welcome the New Year**

**Also to prepare for the New Year: 2 hours of Adoration from 9 pm to 11 pm on Sunday evening**

**Special Collection last weekend for the Christmas Flowers**

Many thanks to rather low number of parishioners who contributed to a total £168 74 including the gift aid.

**Appeal for readers, welcomers, Eucharistic ministers, children's Liturgists, altar servers and choir members**

The parish needs volunteers for the above important roles. Please sign up on the sheet in the porch.

**Our new administrator, who is now being paid, is changing her hours. See beginning of the newsletter.**

**Next SVP Social will be on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January – 1pm to 3 pm**

All welcome" to meet for refreshments and a chat. Bring a friend. Stay for 2 hours or 10 minutes whatever suits you. Looking forward to welcoming you. Renee and Pat.

**Parish collection for last weekend 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December**

							Christmas Flowers		
Parish Envelopes	Gift Aid	Loose Collection	Direct debits, standing orders	Gift Aid	Total of Offertory Collection	Other money	Envelopes	Loose plate	TOTAL of all money
£84	£21	£137.80	£242.54	£51.98	£537.32	---	£25.00	<b>137.49</b>	<b>£699.81</b>