

TO SUM UP...

(JOHN 1:1-18)



Our Gospel reading today comes from the Fourth Gospel: that account opens with an ancient Christian hymn which reflects on who Jesus Christ is, that he is the supreme means by which God completes the divine self-revealing to human beings. Like all summaries, it is very dense and only states what the author believes: the details of how God is revealed will be set out in the Gospel narrative which follows.

The first words, “In the beginning”, echo the opening of the book of Genesis and tell us that even then, before creation, the Word existed in relationship with God. The central, pivotal point of the passage declares that “the Word was made flesh”: the Prologue, as this hymn is usually known, presents Jesus Christ as the incarnation, the “en-flesh-ment”, of this pre-existent Word. He is light and life to those who accept him and offers the possibility of becoming daughters and sons of God to those who decide to put their faith and trust in his message. But Jesus is not just a messenger: he is the Word. Whatever God is, the Word is: they are so closely identified that Jesus can say that “to have seen me is to have seen the Father”. The Christmas story is thus given a cosmic sweep in the vision of the evangelist we call John. ■

SAY

The Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us.

(see John 1:14)

DO

Look at the words on this sheet: think of how they are a means of communicating, just as the spoken word is. Jesus Christ is God’s word to you personally – what is your response?

LEARN

The opening words of today’s Gospel, “In the beginning”, recall the first words of the book of Genesis.

The masculine term “Word” (*logos*) refers to the feminine figure Wisdom (*Hokmah/Sophia*) in the Jewish scriptures.

There is no narrative about the circumstances of Jesus’ conception or birth in the Gospel according to John: the Prologue sets out the evangelist’s understanding of who Jesus is.

REFLECT

On this Sunday, the Gospel invites us to reflect on the mystery of the coming of Jesus Christ into our world. In the Jewish scriptures, God created by word, by speaking, as in the first chapter of Genesis. But God also operated in the world through the female figure of Wisdom in creating and in communicating with human beings. The evangelist refers to this figure by using the masculine term *logos* (or Word): the “he” who was with God in the beginning looks back to the Word and forward to the person of Jesus.

This deep passage, which we should read as poetry, expresses an advanced understanding of the person of Jesus. It gives the outline of the coming of the Word into the world and the way in which people responded. It holds out to us today the same offer of light, life and becoming children of God. This is a free gift (grace): it is not something that we can earn, we have only to accept it and live by it.

As we approach the end of Christmastide, we might take time to reflect on the past few weeks and what the Christmas story

means to us personally. In the thought of the evangelist John, it is all about God reaching out to us in God’s Word: the term “word” suggests communicating, which is what we do when we speak or write to other people. In Jesus, God is inviting us into an intimate relationship: perhaps we might use this reflection to deepen our relationship with God, because that is what faith is all about, in the end. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

When a profound silence covered all things
and night was in the middle of its course,
your all-powerful Word, O Lord, bounded
from heaven's royal throne.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
splendour of faithful souls,
graciously be pleased to fill the world with
your glory,
and show yourself to all peoples by the
radiance of your light.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2.8-12

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus.
Wisdom speaks her own praises,
in the midst of her people she glories in
herself.
She opens her mouth in the assembly of the
Most High,
she glories in herself in the presence of the
Mighty One.
"Then the creator of all things instructed me,
and he who created me fixed a place for my
tent.
He said, 'Pitch your tent in Jacob,
make Israel your inheritance.'
From eternity, in the beginning, he created
me,
and for eternity I shall remain.
I ministered before him in the holy
tabernacle,
and thus was I established on Zion.
In the beloved city he has given me rest,
and in Jerusalem I wield my authority.
I have taken root in a privileged people,
in the Lord's property, in his inheritance."
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 147

Response:
The Word was made flesh,
and lived among us.

or
Alleluia!

- O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!
Zion, praise your God!
He has strengthened the bars of your
gates,
he has blessed the children within you (R.)
- He established peace on your borders,
he feeds you with finest wheat.
He sends out his word to the earth
and swiftly runs his command. (R.)
- He makes his word known to Jacob,
to Israel his laws and decrees.
He has not dealt thus with other nations;
he has not taught them his decrees. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 1:3-6.15-18

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, who has blessed us with all the
spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before
the world was made, he chose us, chose us
in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live
through love in his presence, determining
that we should become his adopted sons,
through Jesus Christ, for his own kind
purposes, to make us praise the glory of his
grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved.

That will explain why I, having once heard
about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the
love that you show towards all the saints,
have never failed to remember you in my
prayers and to thank God for you. May the
God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father
of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and
perception of what is revealed, to bring you
to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten
the eyes of your mind so that you can see
what hope his call holds for you, what rich
glories he has promised the saints will
inherit.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Glory be to you, O Christ, proclaimed to the
pagans;
glory be to you, O Christ, believed in by the
world.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 1:1-5.9-14

The longer form may be read: John 1:1-18
A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.
In the beginning was the Word:
the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came to be,
not one thing had its being but through him.
All that came to be had life in him
and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not overpower.
The Word was the true light
that enlightens all men;
and he was coming into the world.
He was in the world
that had its being through him,
and the world did not know him.
He came to his own domain
and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to all who believe in the name of him
who was born not out of human stock
or urge of the flesh
or will of man
but of God himself.

The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the
Father,
full of grace and truth.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Sanctify, O Lord, the offerings we make
on the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son,
for by it you show us the way of truth
and promise the life of the heavenly Kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

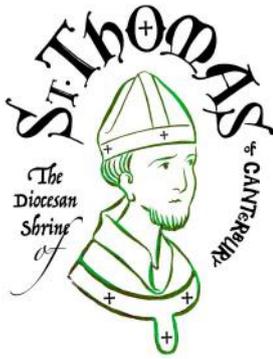
COMMUNION ANTIPHON

To all who would accept him,
he gave the power to become children of God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord our God, we humbly ask you,
that, through the working of this mystery,
our offences may be cleansed
and our just desires fulfilled.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

NEWSLETTER



CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

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Assistant Priest: Fr John Howard

email: johnhoward@rcaos.org.uk

Parish Administrator: Miss Linda Scott

St Thomas' Shop (01227 462896): OPEN SUNDAYS FROM AFTER 9.30 MASS UNTIL 12 NOON

University of Kent Chaplaincy: Fr Tom Herbst (01843 230 774) email: tjherbst@gmail.com

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School: Head Teacher: Miss Lisa D'Agostini (01227 462539)

St Anselm's Catholic Secondary School: Exec Prin: Mr M Walters; Academy Prin: Mr J Rowarth (01227 826200)

The Parish Office is Closed & Linda is working from home. Linda can access emails via the church email so please contact her this way initially.

ALL MASSES ARE LIVESTREAMED

6.00pm (Vigil): People of the Parish

Sunday 3rd Jan: 2nd Sunday after the Nativity

Jn 1: 1-18

8.00: For the Intentions of Joan Blows

9.30am: UCM members and their families

11.00am: John Higham -RIP (Cherry Stone)

6.00 pm: Thanksgiving (Nwahiri's Family)

Monday 4th Jan: Feria of Christmas

Jn 1: 35-42

7.30 am:

12 noon: Fr Freddie in Sudan (Cherry Stone)

6.00 pm Live streamed Prayer

Tuesday 5th Jan Feria of Christmas

Jn 1: 43-51

12 noon: Fr Stan in India (Cherry Stone)

6.00 pm Live streamed Prayer

Wednesday 6th Jan: THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Mt 2: 1-12

Solemnity

9.30am: Sheila Smart RIP

10.30am: Reconciliation

12 noon: Welfare of Elizabeth Lim (Martina Clark)

6.00 pm Live streamed Prayer

Thursday 7th Jan: St Raymond of Penyfort

Mt 4:12-17, 23-25

7.30am:

12 noon: Anthony & Christina Sage (Phyllis Steel)

6.00 pm Live streamed Prayer

Friday 8th Jan: Feria of Christmas

Mk 6: 34-44

12 noon: David & Gladys Murphy RIP (EM Murphy)

7.30pm: Canon Frank Sullivan RIP

Cremation: Ann Marlina Sexton RIP

Internment: Paulina Manfredim RIP

Saturday 9th Jan: Feria of Christmas

Mk 6: 45-52

10.30am: Reconciliation

12 noon: Chris Dyckhoff SJ RIP (Cherry Stone)

6.00pm (Vigil): Ignatius Dempsey RIP (Al & Tim)

Sunday 10th Jan: The Baptism of the Lord Mk 1: 7-11

8.00am: People of the Parish

9.30am: Fr Mike Gwinnell RIP

11.00am: Gail Fosbrook Birthday (Tessa Metcalfe)

6.00 pm: Fr Gerry Flood RIP

Canon Anthony, Fr John & Monsignor Canon John thank everyone so much for your wonderful generosity for the gifts & cards you have given us.

We wish everyone a very happy New Year.

PARISH MATTERS

Please remember in your prayers:

Marie Strong, Pat Gill, Angeline Frizell, Alan Skeet, Louisa Ward, Janette Hughes, Barbara Brett, Mary Dittrich, Pat Gibson, Jenni Aldridge, Mary Reynolds, Brian Wicker, Joan Sutton, Audrey Martin, Elizabeth Gilhenny, Bill Parker, Lucy Purbrick, Josie Carr, Simon Lam, Sr Anne Bross (formerly of our parish), Pippa Swan, Fr John Slater, Jennifer Lang, Pauline Lilford, Barbara Markham, Patricia Gray, Patrick Sellars & Fr Kevin Alban O.Carm

Please pray for the repose of the souls of:

Maria Bryant, Pamela Dodds, Roberto de Paco, John Todd, Carol Mary Kidby, Anna Hesketh, Tom Hodges, Rebecca Judge, Gertraude Katherine Brock, Vera Fletcher, Maria Daniels, Maria Prado, Hannelore Hall, Bernie Fisher, Joseph McKee, Tony Kenny, Michael Jones, Douglas Ricketts, Maurice Crosland, Patricia Collins, Andrzej Czupkowski, Chris Bateman, Pia Iannacci, Antonio Iannacci, Ellen Fitzgerald, Anna Koeller, Fr Michael Gwinnell, Ann Sexton and Paulina Manfredim

Please pray for those whose 1st anniversaries are this month:

Anthony Weber and Tedina Linehan

MASS INTENTIONS 2021: There are many opportunities now open for you to have a Mass said for your intentions. Please email or telephone the Parish Office for a time and date. Donations can be made directly to the parish bank account or in cash to the Parish Office. Please Gift Aid where you can. Thank you.

Last chance to apply for a place at St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School

Do you have a child born between 1st September 2016 and 31st August 2017?

Applications to be made for the Foundation Stage (reception Class) Intake starting September 2021 need to be in by midnight on Friday 15th January.

Go to the school website for all the necessary information on how to apply.

As a faith school, we have our own Supplementary Information Form which applicants will need to complete in addition to the Kent County Council online application form. This provides us with the applicants religious background/information. If the religion provides evidence i.e. Baptism/Christening certificate, please ensure this is supplied alongside the Supplementary Information Form. <https://www.st-thomas-canterbury.kent.sch.uk/news/detail/admission-to-foundation-stage-reception-class-sept/>

From Fr Anthony ...

As the new year begins I look back and I ask myself; "what has 2020 taught me?" It has shown me that life is precious and a great gift. The pandemic had taught me that what really matters is friendship and love and that we need each other because we are all part of one family. I missed the parish community being physically present when celebrating Mass. In April I remember venturing out a short distance and experiencing the shock of seeing the vivid greens of the trees and fields in the spring sunshine. I found more time to pray and listen and, when the church was open again in June, I felt the joy of people experiencing a time of quiet to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. I have marvelled at the ingenuity of our 9:30 music group in creating music that help us to worship even though we were not allowed to sing. As a priest, I have felt totally inadequate when faced with the sorrow of the bereaved, and when encountering the sadness of those who were prevented from being physically close to their loved ones who were ill. I continue to pray for those who experience fear and anxiety as they nurse and care for those who have Covid -19.

On this second Sunday of Christmas we hear again the opening of St John's Gospel. When I hear the words:

"All that came to be had life in him
and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not overpower,"

I am reminded of one of my favourite painting in the National Gallery, *The Nativity at Night*. This is an Early Netherlandish painting of about 1490 by Geertgen tot Sint Jans. It is a panel painting in oil on oak. The painting shows the Nativity of Jesus, attended by angels, and with the Annunciation to the shepherds on the hillside behind seen through the window in the centre of the painting. What is striking is how it conveys the darkness of the night. The commentary that accompanies this painting says "The brilliant light in the foreground comes from the Christ Child in the crib. It illuminates the figure of the Virgin, who bends forward, hands joined in prayer, Saint Joseph in the background, and the figures of the delighted small angels to the left. The idea of the infant Christ illuminating the Nativity scene comes from the writings of the 14th-century Saint Bridget of Sweden. She wrote that in her visions the light of the new-born child was so bright 'that the sun was not comparable to it'. Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness. He is our hope. Our sure and certain hope. As we make our way through this new year we are aware of the darkness that surrounds us. The darkness of the pandemic, darkness of peoples in many parts of the world being treated as slaves and commodities. We are aware of the darkness of self-centredness and greed that can seep into our own lives.

A figure that has been with me over this Christmas time has been Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, Shortly after he was made coadjutor archbishop of Saigon in 1975 he was arrested and imprisoned by the Communists because of his Catholic faith. After 13 years of imprisonment, nine of which were spent in solitary confinement, then-Archbishop Thuan was released on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady. Soon after being taken into custody, Bishop Thuan was determined to persevere. He vowed to himself: "I am not going to wait. I will live each present moment, filling it to the brim with love." He realised that he could continue to shepherd his people by adopting St. Paul's strategy of writing pastoral letters from prison. He wrote a series of inspirational messages on the backs of calendar pages that were smuggled out and eventually published as a book, *The Road of Hope*. Pope Benedictine wrote his letter on Christian Hope, Spe Salvi, "During the thirteen years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, that fact that he Cardinal Van Thuan) could listen and speak to God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him, after his release, to become for people all over the world a witness to hope - to that great hope which does not wane even in the nights of solitude.

I pray that in this new year we may, like Cardinal Van Thuan, reflect the light of Christ, the true Hope of the world.

100 CLUB: It is that time of year when we ask parishioners to either renew their membership or apply to join our 100 Club - the laziest way of donating to church funds while still taking a bit of a gamble! Renewal forms are available on our website (under Giving) or via email from Linda in the Office. Closing date for return of the renewal forms is Friday, 4th January 2021 and thereafter any unclaimed numbers will be allocated to new applicants. Email or phone Linda if you have questions.

CONTACTLESS GIVING / ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

We have contactless giving available in the Parish. From the device in the church, receipts can be sent to you electronically. Try it out to see if it works for you! The office also offers contactless or electronic payments for Mass intentions and other transactions. Please see Linda if this is your preferred payment method of donation. If you donate directly into the Parish Bank account for a Mass donation, please send an explanatory email to Linda in the office - this helps with accurate record keeping.