



The Catholic Parishes of St Augustine of Canterbury, Meir St Filumena, Caverswall & St Mary, Cresswell

24th December 2017

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT – Year B

50/2017/ks

St Augustine's (for Parish Office): 146 Sandon Road, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent. ST3 7DF

St Filumena's: Blythe Bridge Road, Caverswall. ST11 9EA

St Mary's: Cresswell Old Lane, Cresswell. ST11 9RF

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SUNDAY REFLECTION

Today is the 4th and the last Sunday of Advent before Christmas, and are lit all the four candles in the Advent wreath. Indeed we are at the threshold of Christmas and the birth of Baby Jesus is now imminent. In a few days' time we will be celebrating the memory of that great event. Throughout Advent, we have heard of God's promise to send a Liberator - a Saviour into the world; today, we catch a glimpse of how that is to be accomplished and to some extent, we can associate with the greatest joy of the Blessed Virgin Mary who awaited the coming of Baby Jesus into the world.

The Scripture Readings of today speak about the preparations that God made for his Son to be born among us and as one of us. In the First Reading from the "2nd Book of Samuel", King David wishes to build a house for God better than his own. He seeks some way to give thanks to God for all the blessing he received from him. But God has not finished filling his life with blessings. In the Second Reading from his "Letter to the Romans", St. Paul speaks about the mystery of salvation about to be revealed and marvels at the divine plan and gives glory to God. In the Gospel Reading from St. Luke, we have the familiar passage of the Annunciation where the Angel Gabriel tells Mary that she has found favour with God and announces the divine identity of the child whom Mary is about to conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Jewish tradition to bear a son was a blessing from God. But for Mary the circumstances were hardly reassuring. She realizes that humanly speaking it makes no sense. She has not been with a man. So, she asks for a clarification as to how it would happen. The Angel's response is that all will be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit that was present at the first creation manifested the glory of the Temple and signified the divine presence in the world will now bring the new creation in her. Moreover, that nothing is impossible for God. With little else to go on but the word of the angel Gabriel, Mary freely accepted the fact that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah and surrendered herself to the will of God. Mary listened and humbly answered the invitation: "*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word*". Just as God had freely chosen to give, Mary had also freely chosen to accept. And with her simple 'Fiat', her unhesitating 'Yes', Mary changed the course of salvation history forever. God becomes one of us. God is present among us.

Today, we are standing right at the front door of Christmas and before we enter, Mary has been presented to us, this last Sunday of Advent to be our model. Let us follow her example of faith and holiness, humility and simplicity, obedience and surrender to the will of God, as we await the coming of our Saviour into the world and into our lives. Obviously, God's choice of Mary to be the Mother of His Son was special. But God has also chosen all of us for something special. For this, like Mary, we are also favoured. What has been our response to God's choice of us? Consequently, like Mary, we are challenged to use our freedom and respond with our 'yes' to God's call. And this is the Good News of today.

NEWS FROM THE PARISHES

BIBLE STUDY meets on Thursdays at 19:30 in the St Augustine's Presbytery. We spend time looking at the Mass Readings for the following Sunday – why not join us?

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM will take place at St. Augustine's on January 10th & 24th at 19:00. Parents and Godparents are invited. Please inform a member of clergy after Mass on Sunday if you wish to attend.

BIRTHDAY LIST - If you are new to the parish or missed giving your birthday for some reason and would like to be included on the Birthday List, please give your name and birth date to one of the priests. Each month, all whose names are on the list will be prayed for and a Mass will be said for their intentions. Thank you

CAFOD - Thanks you for the very generous donations for CAFOD Christmas gifts last Sunday:

At **St. Augustine's** – The total is £230. We have been able to buy 1 Greenhouse, 3 Vegetable Gardens, 3 sets of Drought Resistant Crops, 5 Queen Bees that will attract other bees to the hives and produce honey, Clean Water for 1 Family and 1 School Starter set and a solar light to provide a clean source of light for children to do their homework.

At **St. Filumena's** - the total is £136.00. This has paid for a cow, and training on how to care for the cow. This can provide a family with milk to supplement their diet, manure to help grow crops, and calves and extra milk to sell at market. It has also bought 5 fruit tree saplings plus tools and training to provide fruit for a family to eat with extra to sell at market. 56 child vaccinations have been bought too.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS - there is a collecting plate at all churches for donations, please.

ALTAR SERVERS – On the Feast of St. Stephen (Tuesday, 26th December) during Holy Mass we will pray for our Altar Servers in thanksgiving for their important ministry. On the day of St. Stephen, the Patron Saint of Altar Servers, three of our Servers will receive their Guild Medals. For this occasion the Altar Servers from our three Parishes are very welcome to attend.

Please note that the Fourth Sunday of Advent is on 24th December: Masses for the Fourth Sunday of Advent DO NOT fulfil the Obligation for Christmas Day, and Masses which fulfil the Obligation for Christmas Day DO NOT fulfil the Obligation for the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Therefore: The following Masses fulfil the obligation for the Fourth Sunday in Advent:

Saturday 23rd December: 18:00 (St Augustine), 18:00 (St Mary),

Sunday 24th December: 9:00 (St Filumena), 11:00 (St Augustine)

The following Masses fulfil the Obligation for Christmas Day:

Christmas Eve (24th December): 18:00 (St Augustine), 18:00 (St Mary)

Christmas 'Midnight': 21:00 (St Augustine), 00:00 - midnight (St Filumena)

Christmas Day (25th December): 9:30 (St Augustine), 9:00 (St Filumena)

PLEASE PRAY

For those who are ill, especially: Hollie Tomkinson, Susan Brady, Ursula Grocott, Kathleen Smith, Sarah Stevenson, Dorothy Swift, Josie Coates, Arthur Rushton, Mrs. Burton, Cekeera Grocott, Olivia Killeen, Frederick Blaize, Jean Dawson, Michele Yon, Dorothy Vasey, Molly Blurton, Margaret Smith, Betty Walton, Margaret Stones, Marjorie Birks, Vincent Coleman, Dorothy Tantrum, Val Emery, Rosa Coronato, Edigio Coronato, Doris Kelly, Dorothy Sawyer, Christopher and Elizabeth Browne, Jane Preston, Molly Crowther, Chris Kelsall, Joyce Brown, Lynn Kent, Christopher & Clifford Browne, Deacon Trevor, Janice Austin, Fr Joseph Tynan, Albert Dawson, Joan Brindley, and Pat Shufflebotham, Doreen Thomson.

For those who have died recently and those whose anniversary occurs around this time.

Parish Offertory for last weekend:

<u>Meir:</u>	£472.00	of which	£245.00 was gift aided
<u>Caverswall:</u>	£358.98	of which	£221.62 was gift aided
<u>Cresswell:</u>	£ 95.65	of which	£ 89.00 was gift aided

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

please gift aid, if possible

WHAT IS THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS ?

December has come and with it all the joys of Christmas. But what is the real meaning of Christmas? Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, turkey dinners with family and friends, snow in the yard, stockings hanging in the living room, and shouts of “Merry Christmas” to those who pass us in the streets? Is this really Christmas?

For many people, Christmas is a time of sorrow. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many are saddened at Christmastime when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to come home for various reasons. Turkey dinners may be only a wish and not a reality for some.

Yet, Christmas can be a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary baby. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before. The star stopped over Bethlehem just to mark the way for those who were looking for this special child.

Why did He come? Why did God send His son to this sometimes cruel and hard world? He sent Jesus to us so that one day, He would grow up to become a very important part of history. His story (history) is one of truth, love, and hope. It brought salvation to all of us. Without Jesus, we would all die in our sins.

Jesus was born so one day the price could be paid for the things we have done that are wrong. The Bible says that all have sinned. We are all born with a sin nature. We do things that do not please God. Through the sins of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited that sin nature. We need to have that removed. The only way is through Jesus. Jesus came so He could die on the cross for all of our sins. If we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we can ask Him to come into our hearts and forgive us. Then, we are clean and made whole. We can know that heaven is a place where we can go to when this life is over. But *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”* [1 John 1:8-10].

The true meaning of Christmas is love. God loved His own and provided a way - the only Way - for us to spend eternity with Him. He gave His only Son to take our punishment for our sins. He paid the price in full, and we are free from condemnation when we accept that free gift of love. *“But God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* [Romans 5:8].

We can truly be happy at Christmas! No matter what may be happening, we can know that we are His children. We then become sons and daughters of God. Heaven will be our home one day.

Look at Christmas in a new way this year. This is the year to invite Jesus into your heart. You will then have a “Merry Christmas”. The joy and peace you will receive will last all year as you look to God for all your needs to be met.

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON! REJOICE!

* * *



Open your eyes and see how Jesus Christ works in your life. Look back and be thankful for all the blessings you received and for staying strong despite all odds that came your way.

May the love of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, surround you all the days of your life.

Merry Christmas to you and your family!

MASS TIMES AND INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

	St. Augustine's MEIR	St. Filumena's CAVERSWALL	St. Mary's CRESSWELL
23rd December Saturday	18:00 (<i>Sunday Vigil</i>) – Alison Reynolds RIP		18:00 (<i>Sunday Vigil</i>) – Patrick McVey RIP
24th December SUNDAY 4 th Sunday of Advent - Year B	11:00 – People of the Parish	9:00 –	
24th December Christmas Vigil Sunday	18:00 – Sean Maloney RIP		18:00 –
25th December Christmas Midnight Monday	21:00 – Sisters of Mercy Gravesend	00:00 (<i>midnight</i>) – Private Int	
25th December CHRISTMAS DAY Monday	9:30 – Fr Paul Intention	9:00 – People of our Parishes	
26th December Feast of St Stephen, the first Martyr Tuesday	9:30 – Peter Chetwin RIP	11:00 - Bentley Family	
27th December Wednesday Feast of St John, Apostle, Evangelist	9:30 – The Arnold Family		
28th December Thursday Feast of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs	9:30 – Jean & John Jewel RIP		
29th December Friday Feast of St Thomas Becket, Bishop, Martyr	9:30 – Mark Travers RIP 18:00 – Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Benediction 19:00 -		
30th December Saturday Sixth Day in the Christmas Octave	9:30 – Kevin Maleedy RIP		18:00 (<i>Sunday Vigil</i>) – Neville Mountford RIP
31st December SUNDAY Feast of the Holy Family - Year B	11:00 – Intentions of those who celebrated Birthday in December	9:00 – People of Parish	

 Confessions	<i>Friday:</i> 18:00 – 18:45 <i>Saturday:</i> 10:00 – 10:30	<i>Sunday</i> before Mass 8:15 – 8:45	<i>Saturday</i> before Mass 17:15 – 17:45
	and <i>BY REQUEST</i>		

MASS INTENTIONS – PLEASE HAND IN ENVELOPE TO A MEMBER OF THE CLERGY

When in the church
talk only to God before the service;
let God talk to you during the service;
and talk to one another after the service but only outside the church!

Please send items for the Parish Newsletter by Thursday evening (e-mail: augustineandmary@hotmail.com)