

ParishQuarterly

Our Lady & All Saints Catholic Church, Otley

www.olasotley.org

CHRISTMAS 2019



“Blessed are those
who believe
that the promises
made by the Lord will be fulfilled”

Father Lawrie's Christmas Message

We've heard a lot of promises during the last few weeks as politicians of all parties have become more and more generous with their promises on the NHS, Social Care, schools and many other topics, in the hope of attracting our votes. Well now it's all over I suppose we'll have to wait and see if they will become realities.

But in real life we all make promises. Some are well known: We hear “I **promise** to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” in courtrooms throughout the land.

“I **promise** that I will do my best. To do my duty to God and to the Queen. To help other people. And to keep the Cub Scout Law.”

“I **promise** that I will do my best, to be true to myself and develop my beliefs, to serve the Queen and my community, to help other people and to keep the (Brownie) Guide Law.”

All these are common in our everyday life.

Couples make promises at their wedding, parents make promises at their children's Baptism to “bring them up in the practice of the Faith”.

In the older translations the parents and Godparents “Deny Satan and all his empty promises.”

Of course not all promises are kept. But at this time of the Church's liturgical year we are reminded that we belong to a people on their way to a “Promised Land”; a people that no longer walk in darkness because the light of the world has been promised to us. We can all recall the promise made to Mary “A child will be born to you.”: and “He is Mighty God and wonder counsellor.”

This Christ Mass season we are all reminded that we are a people of the Promise that God makes to us ... that He is always with us.

In response the God's unfailing promise to us, perhaps we can join our voices to that of St Elizabeth at the Visitation ... “Blessed are those who believe that the promises made by the Lord will be fulfilled” . That indeed would be a perfect Christ Mass promise.

Father Lawrie

Reflections on Christmas in the Scriptures

For many of us this is a time of the year when our main focus should be on the Nativity but instead we are caught up in the hustle and bustle which increasingly seems to be the norm these days. I hope to be able to take a step back from all this and take time to reflect on the spiritual and scriptural place of the Nativity in our thoughts and lives. The content is easily accessible from your Bible.

The four Gospels are surprisingly different and in this Year of the Word are worth a closer look. Open your New Testament at Matthew Chapter 1, the ancestry of Jesus. I remember long ago that we used to regard this as one of the most boring Gospel readings but I have come to understand that it kick-starts the Gospels by locating Jesus firmly as descended from Abraham through David. Among his forbears were notably a few women, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. If you read their stories they tell you something about Jesus and his attitude to women you might have missed!

Of course there is his mother Mary but she is mentioned along with Joseph. Having set the scene Matthew

moves on to the conception and birth of the Lord. Notice that his version of the Annunciation is to Joseph, in a dream, to fulfil a prophecy of Isaiah, and Matthew mentions the birth itself in one sentence. He then moves on to Jesus' infancy again with an emphasis on Joseph, dreams and fulfilment of prophecy.



Mark does not mention Jesus' birth or infancy at all. He starts his Gospel by naming Jesus as "the Son of God" and, already an adult, being baptised by John. Here one should reflect on the importance of John the Baptist in Jesus' early days from before his birth to his adulthood and public ministry. Luke is maybe our strongest source of familiar Christmas stories. He carefully links the pregnancies of Mary and her

kinswoman Elizabeth and the birth of their children. We have the two great prayers, the Magnificat and the Benedictus introduced which are still recited daily in the Church. We hear about the Annunciation (to Mary), the visitation and the birth in a stable in Bethlehem with angels and shepherds in attendance.

John's Gospel is always the one I personally turn to however when reflecting on the Incarnation. It is fitting that in this Year of the Word to note that, for John, Jesus was the Word, with God from the beginning and witnessed to by the Baptist. "The Word became flesh and lived among us". A careful and prayerful reading of the Prologue is always helpful at Christmas.

I wish you all a happy and holy Christmas.

For ease of reference the following may be helpful:

Tamar. Genesis: Ch.38.

Rahab. Joshua: Ch.2.

Bathsheba. 2 Samuel: Ch.11.

Ruth. Read the whole Book. It is very short and a beautiful story.

Frank Bowe



My Ministry: Heart, hands and feet

On the last week of this coming January, I celebrate 40 years of playing the organ for weekend masses in this church.

I started this vocation at the tender age of 15 and still at school. Fr Finn, the parish priest at that time made an appeal at the beginning of 1980 for an organist needed as they were short of them. I stepped forward and volunteered as I had some experience in music. Here I am still in service 40 years later! I thoroughly enjoy playing the organ at Mass as it's a way of being slightly closer to God in the form of musical prayer. There are many ways of speaking to God and I suppose this is one of them: in addition to quiet prayer, I use music. I feel especially privileged each time I play at a funeral:

I always hope the quiet organ music beforehand helps to create a peace and a calm that family and friends attending the funeral will appreciate.



And in the same way, accompanying the family's choice of hymns gives me a sense of supporting them in the best way I can.

For many years I was the sole organist in this parish and accompanied the hymn singing at church for all Masses at the weekend with help from June Heatley, (the recently retired music teacher at St Joseph's school). I'm now part of a team of three who share the privilege of providing the music for the Mass. I would like to thank Paul Hirst and James Willans for their help and all the parishioners and Fr Lawrie for tolerating my occasional wrong notes, and to pray that I am able to continue in this musical vocation for many years to come.

Danny Hinchliffe

The Sacrament of Confirmation

On Wednesday 20th November twenty of our young parishioners travelled to Leeds Cathedral to complete their initiation into the Church by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

“When I went into the Cathedral I thought it was amazing; it took my breath away. The Cathedral had a huge organ and a big chair for the Bishop. It felt very special being in the Cathedral and waiting for my Confirmation,” said one of the candidates.

After participating wholeheartedly in the preparation sessions the candidates decided they wanted to commit themselves fully to their faith. They were

reminded by Bishop Marcus that no matter what challenges life brings us or what path we may decide to take God is always there for us; we only have to remember to ask.

During the rite of Confirmation the candidates made the promises that their parents had made for them at their Baptism.

They were also sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit as Bishop Marcus anointed the candidates with Chrism as he made a sign of the cross on their foreheads.

One of the candidates said, “When I had Chrism put on my forehead I felt special and a warm feeling came over me. I knew God was present.”

On Sunday the 24th November the newly confirmed parishioners led the Going Forth Mass. It was fitting that it was also Youth Sunday as the future of The Church is in their hands.



The Confirmation candidates were reminded that when they chose to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation they said ‘yes’ to their faith and they are now on a life-long adventure of living out their Catholic Faith.

They were reminded that Confirmation is not the end; it is the beginning.

Congratulations to all the Confirmation candidates. We are all very proud of you and will keep you in our prayers. **A full list of candidates listed on the back page.**

Bishop Marcus’ message to our candidates was, “I pray that the sacrament which you have just received will strengthen your faith and make you faithful witnesses to the Gospel”.

Marie Russell

A special thanks to all our dedicated catechists who have prepared our young people so well.



Precious gifts

Most of us would agree that Christmas Day is the day more than any other that we miss those who were especially dear to us and are no longer with us. It's a day when we give and receive gifts, and perhaps helps us to think how precious are the gifts of family and friends themselves. I came across something recently that was apparently a prayer of the Aztecs of South America . It speaks of how precious we are to each other and of how we need to accept that God "loans us each other only for a while".

Joe McGuinness

**O Divine gift-giver,
Let me not take those I
love for granted, and fail
to remember that you
have loaned them to me
for only a short while.**

Help me on this Christmas Day to love those you have loaned to me as if tomorrow you would call them home to you. Let me not take them for granted, or be blind to the wonder of their presence, to the sound of their voice, to the joy of their companionship, or to the beauty of their love. May I always see their faults and failings as so trivial compared to the wonder of the Gift you have loaned to me for a while.

Adapted from "Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim" by Edward Hays and reproduced with the kind permission of Ave Maria Press Inc, PO Box 428, Notre Dame, IN46556



Youth Ministry

Recently I have reflected upon the story of John the Baptist, the famous last prophet. He is described to us as a wild man; unshaven, poor clothing and an eccentric diet. Some people saw John and thought that he himself was the Messiah. We all know that he was a man who was pointing towards God and the person of Jesus. Even though John's ministry ended before even Jesus began his earthly ministry, it is a concept that is very much relevant for ourselves today. The Youth Ministry project after all, is not for our own personal glory. It is for God's greater glory and for the young people in our community and at our schools to come to know Him in a deeper way.

So, how are we going to point the way in 2020? The Project will continue to

support Faith in Action and Youth SVP in our Schools, as well as grow our own parish Faith in Action group. We will update our social media to allow young people and parents to connect with the Project. With the help of our schools we will continue to provide more opportunities for young people to engage with the ministry at parish level. Finally, we will continue to grow the youth club allowing the young people of the parish to meet up, have fun and grow in faith.

We will continue to meet the young people where they are at in their faith journeys and explore opportunities for them to express their faith. Thank you for your ongoing support of our young people, I ask that you keep them in your prayers and I wish you all a very blessed Christmas and I look forward to continuing to serve this parish in the new year.

God bless,

Matthew Steen

Congratulations to all those who received the Sacrament of Confirmation:

**Daniel Agnew
Sebastian Booth
Archie Costello
Kit Dovernor
Kieron Farley
Archie Houldsworth
Francesca Jackson
Patrick Jordan
Piotr Karwacki
Iga Karwacki
Jude Lenik
Zak McQuaid
Madeleine Mulholland
Pio Nandhiyattu
Niamh Ormsby
Hanna Porebska
Maja Sharp
Ruby Teahan
Brodhi Webster
Patrick Wraithmell**

Baptisms

Please pray for:

**Gabriel Mac Wilce
Jack Denis Bacon
Amelie Aoife Shaw
Martha Elin Shaw
Christian Alexander Perez
India Grace Richmond-Holmes
Hughie Jake Eric Donnell**

Recently Deceased

Charles O'Neill

*Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon him.
May he rest in peace. Amen*

PARISH Retreat Day

Led by Breda Theakston

**Saturday
25th January 2020**

**The Briery
Retreat Centre**

01943 607287

briery@btconnect.com

This retreat is open to anyone who would like the opportunity for a quiet and reflective day at the beginning of the year.

