



St Vedast-alias-Foster

Peace and Contemplation in the City

NEWS FROM FOSTER LANE

Newsletter No. 10, there will be no newsletter next week

Advent 4

A Christmas message from Fr Paul

Love knocks with such frosted fingers.
I look out.
In the shadow of so vast a God I shiver

Writes the Welsh poet RS Thomas in *Blind Noel*. It's a bleak vision of daring to hope over the Christmas period, a vision to which we can all relate at the end of 2020. I write this being unsure of whom I should see over Christmas and wondering whether the turkey gets replaced with a chicken. I can almost feel the lonely discomfort of the heavy pregnant Mary aching and panting her way to Bethlehem. Was that inn really full or was Mary an embarrassment? A pregnant teenager, probably still unmarried, hidden out the back.

Mary journeyed from her home to Joseph's ancestral community and, like her, feeling distant from our community has been the experience of recent months. Tempered by Zoom and FaceTime but a breakout room is not a dining table and a screen is not touch; and a stable behind an inn is not a hospital room with a midwife.

I'm drawn to those lines from RS Thomas as the warmth of love and the cold of frost are part of the same moment. Recalling that the in-breaking of the divine and the vulnerability of a risky birth are the same event: divine light in the dark night of Bethlehem; the eternal born to die; the joy of a mother which leads to incomprehension and grief. The first Christmas was even more messy than Christmas 2020.

Christmas is partly crib scenes and nativity plays. These enchant the narrative for both child and adult but God, the Word, taking on human flesh is also a challenge for all human flesh. "The Son of God became human so that we might become God" wrote the fourth century Athanasius. It sounds almost blasphemous but that was a frequent charge used against Jesus. In reality it's more a challenge than a promise: how do we align our desires with the eternal; how do we respond if we are divine Love?

Wishing you a safe and joyful Christmas

Fr Paul

(I don't mind whether it's turkey or chicken, as long as I get the stuffing)

Service information

We plan to sing carols in the courtyard at the **20 December Parish Mass**. We cannot sing inside. Sparkling wine will follow Communion.

Christmas will be celebrated with a **First Mass of Christmas on Christmas Eve at 4 pm** when it will already be dark.

The church will be closed from Christmas Day and open again, when we celebrate the Epiphany, on Sunday 3 January. But we will have a Parish Mass at 11 am on 27 December along with an afternoon wedding.

Our 12.15 Monday to Friday daily Mass and our 11 am Parish Mass can be attended either in person or on YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq5Plrgy_zMhluHu-ZePfRQ?view_as=subscriber

On Sunday, coffee is either outside in groups of not more than six, or in the comfort of your own home, on Zoom. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89210467362>
Meeting ID: 892 1046 7362

Normal Monday to Friday church opening times remain 11.30 am - 2 pm. This will be reviewed in January.



You can still make your Sunday offering online by clicking on this 'give a little' logo which can also be used for all donations

As with most charities the lockdown has stretched our finances.

Readings for this Sunday printed below.

Sunday 20 December, Advent 4

2 Samuel 7.1-11,16

When King David was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.' Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.' But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus, says the Lord: Are you the one to

build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' Now therefore you shall say to my servant David: Thus, says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you, David, that the Lord will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.

Luke 1.26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.