

SAINT HELEN'S PARISH
SEASON OF ADVENT~CHRISTMAS
2nd Sunday After the Nativity

3rd January 2021



LIVE STREAM

<https://sthelenscaerphilly.com/st-helens-live-stream/>

He Came to His own Domain

THE WORD THIS WEEK

“Pitch your tent in Jacob” “I have taken root in a privileged people”. In a set of readings rarely used, we ponder and rejoice in the amazing wonder of our God’s desire to be with us, and have us be with him. “To all who did accept him, he gave power to become children of God”. “He chose us, in Christ, to be holy and spotless and to live through love in his presence”.

TODAY’S SCRIPTURE: (*Psalter: Week 2*)

Gathering 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.

Ecclesiasticus 24: 1 – 1, 8 – 12.

The wisdom of God has pitched her tent among the chosen People.

Response: Psalm 147.

O Praise the Lord, Jerusalem!
Zion, praise your God!
He has strengthened the bars of your gates,
he has blessed the children within you.

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.

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.

Ephesians 1: 3 – 6, 15 – 18.

He determined that we should become his adopted children through Jesus.

Acclamation for the Gospel:

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

John 1: 1 – 16.

The Word was made flesh, and lived among us.

Prayer of the Faithful: R/. Lord, bless us.



Preface: of the Nativity of the Lord ii .

Eucharistic Prayer: ii.

Communion Antiphon:

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

MASS AND SERVICES DURING THE WEEK:

Sat 2 nd January	6.30pm	2nd SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY Pat Lewis (<i>Live-stream Mass</i>)
Sun 3 rd January	10.30am	for the People of both Parishes (<i>Live-stream Mass</i>)
Mon 4 th January	9.45am 10.00am	Weekdays of Christmas time Morning Prayer of the Church Rosa Channon (SVP)
Tues 5 th January	9.45am 10.00am	Weekdays of Christmas time Morning Prayer of the Church Celeste Cavaciuti (LA)
Wed 6 th January	10.00am	THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD For the People of both Parishes
Thurs 7 th January	9.45am 10.00am	Weekdays of Christmas time Morning Prayer of the Church Private Intention (VT)
Fri 8 th January	9.45am 10.00am	Weekdays of Christmas time Morning Prayer of the Church Eira and Charles O'Donnell (SK)
Sat 9 th January	am pm 6.30pm	Weekdays of Christmas time THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD Pat Lewis (SW)
Sun 10 th January	10.30am	for the People of both Parishes



THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

At any time by prior arrangement with the priest.

The PARISH PRAYER LIST: Among all those we pray for in this time, we continue to remember all suffering from the virus and its effects. We remember also:

Teresa Meade	John Maguire	Graham Jenkins	Sandra Bray	Lloyd Jones
Cecelia Mawby	David Mabey	Isobel Cummins	Pauline Richards	Margaret Jones
Carol Morrissey	Claris Howell	Anne Morgan	Pat Starynski	Yvonne Grandon
Martyn Western	Marjorie Gurney	Carmen Agius	Lowela Teves	Joe Marengi
Pamela and Keith Griffiths	Pat + Pino Emanuelli	Mary & Wilson Brown	Katrin Merry	
Sian Thomas	Winifred Benedict	Albert Carley	Mary Everson	Maura Coll
Eileen Morris				

PRAYER CYCLE FOR OUR DIOCESE: Please pray for the People and Parish of Saint Mary, Monmouth, with their priest, Revd. Nicholas James.

THE YEAR OF THE WORD – THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

“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.”

(Entrance Antiphon Second Sunday after the Nativity)

“Our Saviour really did become man, and this brought about the salvation of the whole man. Our salvation is no illusion, nor is it salvation of the body only; the salvation of the whole man, body and soul, was really brought about in the Word himself.

What was born of Mary, according to scripture, was by nature human; the Lord’s body was a real one – real, because it was the same as ours. This was so because Mary was our sister, since we are all descended from Adam.”

from a Letter of Saint Athanasius

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Thank you

THANK YOU! Many thanks for the many generous, thoughtful, and either warm or delicious presents that appeared at Christmas, for all the cards and good wishes, and for all the most generous Christmas offerings, doubly kind in what has been such a hard year for so many Parishioners.

Thank you also to all who took part, physically or virtually, in the Christmas celebrations (so far). Thanks to Brett Pugh and all the musicians and singers who have enlivened the Christmas Mass and Services with music and with ‘virtual carols’; to the readers, both live and recorded; to the flower arrangers, linen-washers, and all who made the church ready; a great thank you to Keith Anthony and his stewards who ensured our safety and appropriate congregation-in-distance, and to all who helped with cleaning and sanitising. And thank you to many more behind-the-scenes workers; counters and accountants looking after the collections; the ‘telephonists’ who organised the bookings for the Christmass Mass; S.V.P. distributing hampers and the charitable donations organised by the diocese; zooming and technical support; and the many parishioners who keep up contact, support, and prayer for and with one-another in so many different, and sometimes inventive, ways.

Thank you, and thanks be to God, for so many people and so many ways that love, the Word of God takes Flesh among us.

This week is sees the beginning of **THE SPRING TERM** fo our Schools in very uncertain and difficult circumstances. We pray for the leaders, teachers, and staffs struggling through this, and for all the students and their families.

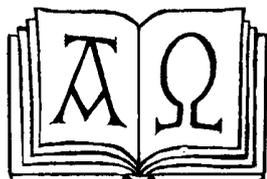


THE BOOK CLUB meets on Tuesday, to discuss ‘the Thursday Murder Club’, our book of the month (a choice which echoed the choice of the nation, as the book wasthe christmas best-seller) and chose a read for the next month. Everybody welcome – join via the Parish facebook page.

Wednesday is the feast of:

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD,

‘Little Christmas’ in the west, the great celebration of Christ coming among us in the East. The feast of the ‘Showing Off’ of Our Lord closes the Christmas festival (though the season still colours our vision till Candlemas, 2nd February) with the coming of the Wise Men to present their meaning-ful presents in recognition of the newborn Christ.



Please join us for our weekly **SCRIPTURE STUDY**, Thursday 7.30pm, where we read through the readings for the coming Sunday and ponder them and their relevance to our lives. Details on St Helen’s Facebook.

Preparing for the Sacraments of **RECONCILIATION AND COMMUNION**: The Parish accompaniment of parents wanting to bring their children to share in the Sacraments will begin with a zoom meeting for parents on Tuesday 19th January. If this is for you, please be sure to register your names (parents and child) with address and contact details, and details of the child’s baptism and present school. Thank you.



VIRTUAL COMMUNITY:

Date	Time	Event
Sat 2 nd Jan	6.30pm	2 nd Sunday after the Nativity
Sun 3 rd Jan	10.30am 11.30am	2 nd Sunday after the Nativity 'Coffee Morning': <i>Via Saint Helen's Facebook</i>
Tues 5 th Jan	7.00pm	Book Club
Wed 6 th Jan	10.00am	MASS of the EPIPHANY
Thurs 7 th Jan	7.30pm	Scripture Study: <i>Via Saint Helen's Facebook</i>
Sat 9 th Jan	6.30pm	SUNDAY MASS
Sun 10 th Jan	10.30am	SUNDAY MASS



Friday was the feast of **Mary, the Mother of God**. Among many requests received for prayers and ambitions for the new year, we include this:

As we begin this new year, we pray for all who may be considering an abortion. We pray that 2021 would see a decrease in cases of abortion, and instead a year of increased support, both practical and emotional, from all of us in society, bettering the care for all expectant mothers. Lord hear us

THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

Part One: **THE PROFESSION OF FAITH**. Section One: 'I Believe' – 'We Believe'

Chapter 3: **Man's Response to God**. Article 1: **I Believe**.

III: The Characteristics of Faith Faith and Understanding

(157) Faith is *certain*. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but "the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives" (*Saint Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 171, 5, obj. 3*). "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt" (*John Henry Cardinal Newman, Apologia pro vita sua (London: Longman, 1878) 239*). (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1992*)

Parish Directory

Priest: Revd. John Kelly 20 883192

Safeguarding Officer: 20864112

Music: 07971848734.

Cafod: 20861930

Saint Helen's School: 20852532

Newsletter items: 20883192

caerphilly@rcadc.org

Website Additions: Website@sthelenscaerphilly.com

Chair of Parish Council:

SVP: 20883462

Bereavement support: 20863450

Hall Bookings: 20883192

Piety shop: 20862998

Marriage Care: appointments@marriagecare.co.uk

Cardinal Newman School: 01443 494110

Calendar Additions: calendar@sthelenscaerphilly.com

www.sthelenscaerphilly.com



Saint Helen is a Parish of the Archdiocese of Cardiff, a Registered Charity.



The Newborn
1648,
Georges de La Tour
(1593 – 1652),
Oil on canvas. 29.9 x 35.8
inch.
Musée des Beaux-Arts de
Rennes, France. Source:
Wikimedia Commons.

The Light has come: Christmas and Epiphany through Art.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

Georges de La Tour was a French Baroque artist who spent most of his professional life in the Duchy of Lorraine. He became a master painter whose works were collected by several French kings. In the 1630s La Tour began to develop his *nocturnes* or evening mood pictures. He would portray a few biblical figures, or sometimes just one person, magically caught in the light and shadow of a flickering candle flame. These religious chiaroscuro scenes are stylistically similar to Caravaggio in both his treatment of subject and colour. La Tour died in 1652, probably of the plague but his legacy is one of enduring beauty.

Scholars disagree on the meaning of this painting's title '*The Newborn*' or '*Newborn Child*' – painted in 1648. Is it a Nativity scene or a domestic scene? What we see first is a young mother gazing intently at her swaddled infant, illuminated by a candle held by an older woman. De La Tour personally suffered from a history of family infant mortality – he had 10 children and only three survived into adulthood. Perhaps it is a window onto guarded grief that we sense in this group.

There is undoubtedly an introspective mood, and there are enough signs to suggest that it is The Nativity. The artists brushstrokes depict the sheer fragility of a newborn baby whose life still hangs in the balance, yet open up the eyes of faith in the light of the Christ. Mary's own life, given to God in one act becomes a shrine, a new Ark of a new Covenant, conveyed in her triangular form enclosing her son. Her story is one of vulnerability and self-sacrifice. She not only holds her baby boy and learns the art of motherhood, but holds God made man in her loving embrace. Here heaven and earth meet in a sacred encounter. Instead of her traditional blue, La Tour robes her in red. Red for bloodshed. Jesus is born to die, and she will witness that death.

La Tour captures a moment in time before the heartbreak. An inner realisation and reflection of the scale of this pure gift. The canvas emphasises this act of contemplation echoing Luke 2:19 '*But Mary treasured all these things in her heart...*' .. Yet who is the matronly figure with Mary? Is it St Anne her own mother? Although St Anne isn't mentioned in any of the Gospels, her name as Joachim's wife appears in the apocryphal writings from the 2nd century onwards. It was Pope Sixtus IV who introduced the devotion to St Anne in 1481. In art she is often depicted as Mary's teacher as well as her mother. Here we delight in the maternal genealogy of Jesus joining grandmother and mother in their homage to the mystery of this new life.

The painting appears to be deceptively simple in composition. Only on close inspection do we see its complexity. The intense red of Mary's dress is achieved by tiny dots of colour of varying hue, and similarly, St Anne's lilac garment is almost pixilated in effect. Just as the ambience is concentrated on a moment of adoration and silence, so also the colours focus on a limited but concentrated palette so that the details, where we encounter them, are more powerful in their revelation. Mary's collar is elaborately decorated, her fingers beautifully defined as she carefully holds her baby, and both her

and St Anne's profiles are painted with an exceptional delicacy of line. St Anne's hat is textured and her chin given weight through age.

Turning to the candlelight half-covered by St Anne's hands, its light becomes a blessing and protection towards her grandson revealing the Christ Child's own light. There is a double revelation here of the divine light and of the Virgin Birth. Transcendence and immanence enfolded in one small bundle. Mary's hands are so careful in their holding of Jesus, her fingers lightly embracing his weight and purpose. They reflect reverence before the incarnation, the revelation of the holy in the ordinary. A deep calm becomes evident the more we look at this painting in the figures so focused and still. The overall impression is of a more modern style of art since no other Nativity at this time employs or arouses such exquisite gentleness of form or grace. Wonder and silence are all we can offer in return. We are invited to simply gaze – we dare not make a sound or move a muscle. Faith is wrapped up as perfect gift and tender truth.

This image helps us to draw close to Jesus, but not just at his birth. With his tight swaddling he prefigures the shroud at death. Bound like a mummy and with eyes closed, he is prepared for what is to come. Without any other symbols in this darkened room, the newborn child becomes timeless. Jesus is.

We awaken in Christ's body
as Christ awakens our bodies,
and my poor hand is Christ, He enters
my foot, and is infinitely me.

I move my hand, and wonderfully
my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of Him
(for God is indivisibly
whole, seamless in His Godhood).

I move my foot, and at once
He appears like a flash of lightning.
Do my words seem blasphemous?—Then
open your heart to Him
and let yourself receive the one
who is opening to you so deeply.
For if we genuinely love Him,
We wake up inside Christ's body

where all our body, all over,
every most hidden part of it,
is realized in joy as Him,
and He makes us, utterly, real,
and everything that is hurt, everything
that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,
maimed, ugly, irreparably
damaged, is in Him transformed
and recognized as whole, as lovely,
and radiant in His light
we awaken as the Beloved
in every last part of our body.

Simeon the New Theologian