

The ‘Year of Prayer’

2023-24 has been designated the Year of Prayer by Pope Francis, with a particular emphasis on the *Our Father*. It will help us prepare for the Jubilee Year “Pilgrims of Hope”. It presents our Church with a significant opportunity to revisit the basics of prayer, and for us to become even more a people of prayer.

Someone once said that ‘prayer doesn’t help our relationship with God, prayer IS our relationship with God!’ So when we become more devoted to prayer, we are building up that Divine friendship. Being Pilgrims of Hope means that we should always be growing in our love of prayer on our journey of Faith. But the Year of Prayer also asks us to consider how we might help others to pray, so that they too can experience a personal encounter with the risen Jesus.

Sunday Afternoon Advent Prayer

All are welcome to take part in times of quiet prayer on the afternoons of the first 3 Sundays of Advent. Come to the Benedict Room at 5.30pm where we will use one of the resources being promoted by the Diocese for use in the *Year of Prayer* groups to explore the themes of Forgiveness, Healing and Mission. This brief introduction will lead us into half an hour for lectio and personal reflection before the Blessed Sacrament in the church; followed by a coffee and chat and home-made mince-pies back in the Benedict Room. The whole thing should last about an hour...

Pope Francis: Teaching on Prayer

In addition to regular materials related to the Year of Prayer being provided in the newsletter or through House Groups, there will be a weekly post on the parish Blog (address on Page 1, and if you ‘follow’ the Blog the post will be sent directly to your email box) This post is taken largely from Pope Francis recent weekly Catechesis on Prayer, and is also linked to readings at Mass on that particular Sunday. This resource has been prepared by Fr Rob Taylerson, Spiritual Director at Oscott College.

Competition

(for children preparing for First Sacraments) Design an A4-sized poster dedicated to a sacrament of your choice - any one of the seven. Your poster should help people understand what Jesus does by the sacrament - and what the sacrament helps us to do/be in our turn. Please hand in your entry at Mass next Sunday.

The Examen: a way of prayer to try during Advent...

The *Examen* is a time of prayer that we use to review our life, to notice what has been going on, to ask for God’s mercy for sins and failings, and to ask for God’s continued help when we return to the business of daily life. It is a form of prayer promoted by St Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Indeed it is the form of prayer that he found indispensable in helping to establish and sustain a truly faithful life. Ignatius urged his Jesuit companions to make the *Examen* a daily habit. Whatever else was happening - sickness or pressures of work - he insisted that they should never omit the *Examen*. Twice a day, about midday and again before going to bed, they were to pause, and take a little time to use the *Examen* to review how they had lived their day.

St Ignatius described five ‘moments’ in the Examen

- I. First to give thanks to God for his blessings.
  - II. Second to ask for grace to know my sins and to be able to turn from them.
  - III. Third to recall what has happened in my day up to now – my thoughts, words, and actions.
  - IV. Fourth to ask pardon of God for my faults.
  - V. Fifth is to resolve to live better by the grace of God.
- Then the *Examen* is brought to an end by praying the Our Father... (the Lord’s Prayer).

The Examen can be adapted to various circumstances.

- Many who are not Jesuits have adopted and adapted this prayer method and find it invaluable.
- Some keep to the twice a day *Examen*.
  - Others use it once a day, and they generally establish a set time for their daily *Examen* - choosing a time according to their body clock and their other commitments!
  - Others pray it once a week, to review their week and prepare for the next.
  - Some prefer first thing in the morning, others late evening, and still others last thing at night.
  - Some may spend 15-30 minutes in this reflection, some 5-10 minutes. Do what seems good to you.

The *Examen* does not have to be prayed at a set time each day, but if we establish a habit in prayer the habit will, each day, help us find time for prayer.



St Nicholas Catholic Church, Boldmere

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**Parish Blog:** www.stnicholasboldmere.wordpress.com  
**Parish Priest:** Fr Allen Morris **Deacon:** Rev John Garvey  
*Our Parish is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham: Registered Charity No. 234216*

DECEMBER 2023: PARISH MASSES				
Sa	2	6pm	First Sunday of Advent	Tommy Quinlisk RIP (Gill)
Su	3	9am		Elizabeth McGrath RIP
		11am		For the parish
M	4	10am		Funeral Mass / Patrick M
T	5	10am	St Birinus	Decsd members of O’Gorman family
W	6	10am	St Nicholas	Francisca Phil Ebosie RIP (Ani)
Th	7	Noon	St Ambrose	Funeral Mass
F	8	7pm	Immaculate Conception	Decsd members of Lee family (W)
Sa	9	6pm	Second Sunday of Advent	Thomas Quinlisk RIP (Gill)
Su	10	9am		For the parish
		11am		Olivia Pratt-Korbel RIP (McD)

**Anointing of the Sick:** Next celebration is 26th January at 11am

**Sacrament of Confession:** Friday 18.30-18.55; 19.30 (after Mass), until 20.00; and Sat 5.30-5.45 — and by appointment

**Please pray for those who are sick** including Theresa Monteiro; Craig Brooks, Paul Craig, Fr Michael Ho, Brenda Davies; Stephen Burke; Lesley Devlin & Jean Lawlor. **Please pray** for Sarah Broom whose funeral is here at 10am on Dec 4; and Jenifer Cummings whose funeral is here at 12noon on Dec 7 and for Catherine Wakeham, Kay Cooper, Frank Kemp, Ann Jordan, John O’Sullivan and all others whose anniversary at this time.

**RESOURCES FOR PRAYER.**  
1. Parish prayer on Zoom (links on parish website homepage)  
**Morning Prayer:** Mon to Sat at 8.30am; **Rosary** Mon at 7pm.  
2. Readings of the day and much more at Universalis.com

**WEEKDAY SOCIAL.** Tuesdays after 10am Mass. All are welcome.

**PARISH CAR PARK** Free parking for one hour is available for anyone at anytime in our carpark. Automatic free parking permits are issued to cover all parking on **Saturdays** from 5.30pm to 7.30pm; on **Sundays** from 8am to 2pm; on **Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays** from 9.30am to 11.30am and **Fridays** from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. *At other times, if on site for parish meetings and the like - to park for more than 1 hour, please scan the QR poster in the church or Benedict Room to extend your ‘free’ parking time.*

The Parish operates in accordance with Statutory **Safeguarding** Guidance and the National and Archdioceses policies & procedures at all times. Our Parish Safeguarding Representative is Mary Rose. She can be contacted at: sg.stnicholas.boldmere@rcaob.org.uk or alternatively the Diocesan Safeguarding team can be contacted on 0121 230 6240 or safeguarding@rcaob.org.uk if you have any concern.

**Times of Xmas Services**  
**Masses of the 4th Sunday of Advent will be 6pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec and 10am on 24<sup>th</sup> Dec.**  
**Christmas Eve/Day Masses are 3pm, 6pm and 9pm on 24<sup>th</sup> Dec & 9am and 11am on 25<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

Keeping Advent

Do please take a copy of the *Walk with Me* booklet (they are free!) Do take a copy of the *Advent/Christmas calendars* to give to your children/ grandchildren/ godchildren or the children who live next door!

The ‘Year of Prayer’ begins today - details of an introduction in special times of Advent Prayer on page 4!

**ADVENT CELEBRATIONS OF THE SACRAMENT OF Penance**  
A Penitential Liturgy for Advent with the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance (Confession). *Tuesday 19th December, 7pm here at St Nicholas. (nb parking restrictions lifted between 6 and 10pm). Homily by Fr Michael Dolman - Rector of Oscott College, and participation of priests from all Catholic Sutton Coldfield parishes.* Opportunities for individual confession (in addition to regular parish provision) are offered at **Holy Cross:** Advent Mondays 2-2.30pm; **Holy Trinity:** Tuesdays of Advent 10.30-11 am; **St Nicholas:** Wednesdays of Advent 9.15 to 9.50am



READING THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Today we begin Year B of the Sunday Lectionary - and on most Sundays of the coming Church year the Gospel readings we hear will come from the Gospel of Mark. For a brief and helpful introduction to Saint Mark’s Gospel go to: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/0>

The Introductory Rites

Opening Song

Word of justice, Alleluia,  
Come to dwell here, Maranatha!  
Word of mercy, Alleluia,  
Live among us. Maranatha!  
Word of power, Alleluia,  
Live within us. Maranatha!  
Word of freedom, Alleluia,  
Save your people. Maranatha!  
Word of healing, Alleluia,  
Heal our sorrow. Maranatha!  
Word of comfort, Alleluia,  
Bring us hope now. Maranatha!  
Word of gladness, Alleluia,  
Fill our hearts now. Maranatha!  
Word of wisdom, Alleluia,  
Come renew us. Maranatha!

The Liturgy of the Word

ISAIAH 63:16-17,64:1,3-8

You, Lord, yourself are our Father,  
‘Our Redeemer’ is your ancient name.  
Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways  
and harden our hearts against fearing you?  
Return, for the sake of your servants,  
the tribes of your inheritance.  
  
Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come  
down! – at your Presence the mountains would melt.  
  
No ear has heard, no eye has seen  
any god but you act like this  
for those who trust him.  
You guide those who act with integrity  
and keep your ways in mind.  
You were angry when we were sinners;  
we had long been rebels against you.  
We were all like men unclean,  
all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing.  
We have all withered like leaves  
and our sins blew us away like the wind.  
No one invoked your name  
or roused himself to catch hold of you.  
For you hid your face from us  
and gave us up to the power of our sins.  
And yet, Lord, you are our Father;  
we the clay, you the potter,  
we are all the work of your hand.

PSALM 79(80):2-3,15-16,18-19

O shepherd of Israel, hear us,  
shine forth from your cherubim throne.  
O Lord, rouse up your might,  
O Lord, come to our help.

God of hosts, turn again, we implore,  
look down from heaven and see.  
Visit this vine and protect it,  
the vine your right hand has planted.  
  
May your hand be on the man you have chosen,  
the man you have given your strength.  
And we shall never forsake you again;  
give us life that we may call upon your name.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send  
you grace and peace.  
  
I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have  
received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you  
have been enriched in so many ways, especially in  
your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has  
indeed been strong among you so that you will not  
be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are  
waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and  
he will keep you steady and without blame until the  
last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God  
by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ;  
and God is faithful.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and  
give us your saving help. Alleluia!

MARK 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Be on your guard, stay awake,  
because you never know when the time will come. It is  
like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home,  
and left his servants in charge, each with his own task;  
and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay  
awake, because you do not know when the master of  
the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow,  
dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you  
asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!’

Homily

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand  
of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

Priest: We pray to the Lord.  
All: Through our lives and by our prayers,  
your kingdom come.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Offertory

NB Our next collections for the Bethany  
Food Bank are 3rd and 17th December.

Be still and know I am with you,  
be still I am the Lord.  
I will not leave you orphans.  
I leave with you my word, be one.

You fear the light may be fading,  
you fear to lose your way.  
Be still and know I am near you.  
I’ll lead you to the day, and the sun.

Be glad the day you have sorrow,  
be glad for then you love.  
The stars shine only in darkness,  
and in your need I give my peace.

The Eucharistic Prayer

Sanctus

Ho-ly, Ho-ly, Ho-ly Lord God of hosts. Heav-en and earth are  
full of your glo-ry. Ho-san-na in the high-est. Bless-ed is he  
who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in the high-est.

Mystery of faith

We pro-claim your Death, O Lord, and pro-fess your Res-ur-rec-tion  
un-til you come a-gain.

The Communion Rite

The Lord’s Prayer

Communion thanksgiving

Christ be beside me, Christ be before me,  
Christ be behind me, King of my heart.  
Christ be within me, Christ be below me,  
Christ be above me, never to part.  
  
Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left hand,  
Christ all around me, shield in the strife.  
Christ in my sleeping, Christ in my sitting,  
Christ in my rising, light of my life.  
  
Christ be in all hearts thinking about me,  
Christ be in all tongues telling of me.  
Christ be the vision in eyes that see me,  
in ears that hear me, Christ ever be.

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rites

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KEEPING ADVENT AT HOME

Keeping Christmas *before* Christmas might seem  
to matter little. But it works against the spiritual  
discipline of keeping Advent. Try telling a Muslim  
that not keeping the fast during Ramadan doesn’t  
really matter! It is easy to squander the chance to  
keep Advent as a time of preparation, of quiet reflec-  
tion and prayer, of fasting and Reconciliation - and  
reap its benefits. Also, if we have been celebrating  
Christmas all the way through Advent what more  
is there when Christmas comes. How many people  
now chuck out the Christmas trees on Boxing Day:  
for them Christmas is over, whereas for the Church  
Christmas has just begun!

The world might exploit Christmas early for com-  
mercial gain. But try to keep Advent - perhaps es-  
pecially by having special times of prayer with the  
family, such as the following

Blessing a Christmas Tree

The use of a decorated tree as part of Christmas is  
relatively modern. Its origins are found in the me-  
dieval mystery plays which depicted the tree of  
paradise and the Christmas light of candles which  
symbolized Christ, the light of the world.

According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up  
just before Christmas and may remain in place un-  
til the solemnity of the Epiphany. The lights of the  
tree are lit after the prayer of blessing.

The following prayer of blessing may be used by  
any member of the family. Before saying the prayer  
of blessing you might like to read some appropriate  
verses from Chapter 2 of the Gospel of Luke.

Lord our God, we praise you  
for the light of creation:  
the sun, the moon, and for the stars of the night.

We praise you for the light of Israel:  
the Law, the prophets,  
and the wisdom of the Scriptures.

We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:  
he is Emmanuel, God-with-us,  
the Prince of Peace, who fills us  
with the wonder of your love.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us  
as we illumine this tree.  
May the light and cheer it gives  
be a sign of the joythat fills our hearts.

May all who delight in this tree  
come to the knowledge  
and joy of salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Make a note in your diary to bring your  
figure of the Baby Jesus to Mass on Sun-  
day16/17 Decr for blessing ready for placing  
it in your family crib on Christmas Night.