



St Francis of Assisi

Parish Newsletter

".....we can celebrate the most beautiful Christmas ever. In one of your woods, in Greccio, there is a cave similar to that of Bethlehem. I would like to represent the Christmas scene and see with our eyes, the poverty in which the Child Jesus came into the world. I want to see how he was placed in a crib and lay there between the ox and the donkey".
St Francis of Assisi.



ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Grove Crescent Road, Stratford, London, E15 1BJ

SUNDAY CYCLE: YEAR B (MARK)

WEEKDAYS CYCLE: II

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - 24TH DECEMBER 2023 **CHRISTMAS EVE.**



**Fourth Sunday
of Advent**

Today the days and weeks of preparing for Christmas are almost over. Christmas Day is just around the corner. Another 24 hours and our Christmas celebrations will be under way. But it's still not too late to capture the true spirit of this feast. Who better to guide us in our quest than Mary, who is at the very heart of the Christmas story?

Today's Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12. 14-16: Although Samuel is a "big man" in his day, he's also sensitive enough to see that it isn't right for him to be dwelling in a spacious house while God dwells "in a tent", and he is determined to do something about it.

Response to the Psalm: I will sing forever of your love, O Lord.

Romans 16: 25-27: Paul rejoices in Jesus, whose strength enables us to live out the Good News so that, reaching to the ends of the earth, it draws all people to become Jesus' disciples. Glory is to be given to the Father through Jesus Christ for ever.

Luke 1:26-38: Luke retells the glorious story of the incarnation. Through Mary's unconditional acceptance of the angel's message, Jesus has come into our world as one of us and is like us in all things, apart from sin.

"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you".

After centuries of waiting for the long-expected Messiah, God's messenger, the angel Gabriel, announced the glorious event to a young woman who lived in Nazareth, an obscure village in Galilee. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel told Mary that she had found favour with God and would bear a son who was to be named Jesus (Hebrew, Yeshua, "Yahweh saves"). The Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give birth to his Son so that all humanity would know God's salvation. Mary, already full of God's grace, cooperated with God's plan for us saying, "Be it done unto me according to your word." Thus, Jesus was born as one of us, fully human and also fully divine. This is the mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and can respond with obedience.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

FRIDAY 22ND DECEMBER 2023 – THE PARISH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED FROM 12 NOON UNTIL

WEDNESDAY 3RD JANUARY 2024.

WEDNESDAY 10TH JANUARY 2024- NIGHT SHELTER BEGINS - IN THE LARGE HALL. SIGN UP SHEETS ARE AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH.

Pray for those who have died, and those whose Anniversaries occur around this time, also, please pray for the sick, and, remember the People of Ukraine. Our thoughts and prayers for the people of Turkey, Syria & Morocco, following the devastating earthquakes, also, the people of Libya who suffered floods.. We also pray for peace in the Holy Land.

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

“Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah”.

Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy to show that Jesus was the fulfilment of Israel's longing for a Messiah. Matthew traces Israel's history through three sets of fourteen generations, from the days of glory when King David sat on the throne to the days of agony when God's people were taken into exile in Babylonia. Matthew's genealogy is symbolic rather than historic. The number 14 is the number of all the consonants in the Hebrew version of David's name (DVD, 4+6+4=14), suggesting that the whole genealogy has a Davidic character. Jesus is the Messianic King whose throne stands firm forever. Although Joseph (of the house of David) assumed legal paternity for the child, the virginal birth shows that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus' family tree also shows some surprising irregularities. Except for Mary, the mother of Jesus, the other four women mentioned are all non-Jews—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Jesus was the faithful son of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed. The child was given the title “Emmanuel” meaning “God is with us.” At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus told his disciples, “Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world”.

THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

Since at least the fourth century, Christians have celebrated the most important liturgical feasts with “octaves” (which means eight)- eight days of celebration. The birth of Jesus Christ is today one of the two octaves we still celebrate—the other is Easter. The octave of Christmas begins on Christmas Day itself, the feast of the Nativity of the Lord. It ends on the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, on January 1. Despite having four days within the octave that are feasts: St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, The Holy Innocents, and The Holy Family, each of these days is another “day of the octave of Christmas.”

The traditional Twelve Days of Christmas begins on Christmas Eve December 24 and continues until the feast of Epiphany on January 6. (The Epiphany, this year, is commemorated on Sunday 7th January). This commemorates the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God by the three Wise Men (and by all nations). The season of Christmas ends on the Monday after the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord, which signifies the purification of the world, through Christ himself.



Silent Night Oh Holy Night.

FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

The day after Christmas Day, the shadow of the cross falls upon the Christmas crib. The mystery of the Incarnation is seen alongside the mystery of the Passion.

Stephen, “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” is the Patron of Altar Servers.



SAINT STEPHEN
FIRST MARTYR

CHRISTMAS MASSES

(25th) 9am; 10.15am;
12noon; 2pm

(Ukrainian)

Tuesday 26th: Mass
10am – followed by

St Anthony Novena St

Stephen's Day - Altar Servers.

Weekday Mass 26th to 30th 10am

Monday 1st January 2024 – (New Years Day)

Mary Mother of God – Mass at 10am.

Weekday Mass 26th to 30th 10am



EPIPHANY

7TH JANUARY 2024:

MASS AT 10am Sunday 7th
January – The Epiphany Of

The Lord. Masses as on

normal Saturday/Sunday. 2pm Prayers around the
Crib followed by a get-together' in the Hall with
Mince Pies and Mulled Wine.



THE PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office will be closed from 12 noon on
Friday 22nd December 2023 and will re-open on

Wednesday 3rd January 2024 at 9:30 am.

**Have a Happy Christmas and a
Peaceful New Year.**

Grove Crescent Rd, Stratford, E15 1BJ

Masses

Monday to Friday 12:15. Tuesday, after Mass, St Anthony
Novena. Saturday: Morning Prayer: 9:40am Mass 10am followed
by Holy Hour Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 11:30am.

Confession: Saturday: 10:30am - 11:30am & 5pm –5:45pm

Sunday: 6pm Saturday, 9am, 10:15am, 12 noon &
4:30pm (Ukrainian).

Fr Michael O'Grady, OFM (Parish Priest)

Fr Brian McGrath, OFM

Fr Yusuf Bagh, OFM

Address: The Friary, 160 The Grove, Stratford, E15 1NS.

Parish Office: Monday to Friday 9:30am - 3pm

Parish Secretary: Kathleen Allen

Pastoral Assistant: Derek Hoddy

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