



Weekly News

Sunday 31st December 2023

Mass of the Holy Family

Knowing, loving and following Jesus

Parish Church of St Richard

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Worship at St Richard's Haywards Heath

Sunday's Mass will be live-streamed onto the St Richard's Facebook page. During the week, the church will also be open most days for private prayer.

Week Commencing 31st December

Tuesday 2 nd	Mass	11:00
Wednesday 3 rd	Mass	19:00
Thursday 4 th	Mass	12.00
Sunday 7th	Mass	10:00

(The Epiphany of the Lord)

Worship at St Mary's Balcombe

Week Commencing 31st December

Sunday 7th	Mass BCP	08:00
Sunday 7th	Parish Eucharist	10:00

(The Epiphany of the Lord)

Foodbank Donations

The church will be open to take donations for the Foodbank on Tuesday at 10:00 – 12:00 and Friday 14:00 – 16:00

Ric's Bench

Ric's Bench sessions this week are on:

Monday 19:00 – 21:00

Friday 14:00 – 16:00

Please do come along for a cup of tea or coffee

Dementia Friendly Cafés @ Ric's Bench

Our next Dementia-friendly café will be **Saturday 6th January at 2:00pm**. Following that there will be a café on Tuesday 16th January at 2pm. Volunteers are always needed and if you would like to volunteer to help, please see Mary King.

Mass Times from 4th February

As previously mentioned, there is to be a change in service times at St Richard's (and also at St Mary's at Balcombe). From 4th February our Sunday Mass will start at 11am. Whilst we appreciate that this may take some getting used to, it will allow Fr David to be present at St Richard's on at least three Sundays in a month. From 3rd February there will also be a Vigil Mass on a Saturday evening for those who may find the change to the Sunday Mass times difficult. This is for a trial period to see how things work out.

Thank you for your understanding and if you have any questions or comments please do speak to Fr David.

Fr John Twisleton's New Book

Journeying Together is Anne and Fr John Twisleton's joint autobiography containing reproductions of sixty of her paintings and something of the way God has worked in the couple's lives including coping with Alzheimer's disease. It has been reviewed in January's Lindfield Life and is on Amazon.

Copies are available to church members for £4.99 and they can be brought to St Richard's church for collection if you order via john@twisleton.co.uk

Of your charity please pray for those in need:

Una Wade, Christopher Grimwood, Colin Hill, Sheila Jobson, Jeannette Robert, Tony Dawson, Maria Firth, Gary Firth, Karen Guy, Suzy Rumbold, Jennifer Walter, Peter Atthis, Jean McCarthy, Louise Wagger, Joyce Rollinson, Kevin Westerman, Frank Phillips, Alex Leaney, Geoffrey Dobson, Gareth Vaughan, Gail Page, Karen Newes, Ruth Parry, Fr Derek Humphrey, Fr Peter Peterken, Audrey Padginton, Jean Padgham, Geoff Wagger, Baby Nancy, Baby Nyle Mahmoud, Kitty, Nick, Marjorie, Stuart, Daniel and Edward.

Those who have died recently:

Audrey Petty, Ursula, Antonia Price

and those whose anniversary fall around this time of year:

31st) Hilda Kemp, Sr Helena of the Cross,
George Wicks, Basil Thomas, 2nd) Alice Lerpiniere,
Dorothy Briegel, 3rd) Harold Adkins (pr),
Kenneth Cole, Madelaine Allen, 4th) Harry Steer,
Hilda Watson, Noel Mercer,
Doreen Wreford-Howard, Derek Coombes (pr),
6th) Emily Truelove, Donald Simmonds,
Marjorie Stammers, Ruby Sopp,

*If you would like anyone added to the prayer list, or would like someone prayed for, but **not** added to the list, please submit your prayer details using the form on the website www.strichards.co.uk/prayer*

Dcn Rebecca's Sermon

Those of you that dabble in Facebook will be aware of me sharing the opening of my Advent calendar, a tradition which started a few years ago.

Accompanying the picture are my theological ramblings and attempts at humour. This year had the addition of some truly awful decorations of the holy family and baby Jesus. Every Advent calendar I've had over the past four years has had the same random and unimaginative set of pictures behind the doors, almost half of which were depictions of the Holy Family.

Its therefore rather nice today to be preaching about the significance of the Holy family. Whilst they appear on Advent calendars and Christmas cards, our depictions of the holy family tend to be limited to a view of Mary sitting, with Joseph standing behind with him arm resting on her shoulders; both with serene expressions, gazing adoringly at baby Jesus. There's nothing wrong with this view of the holy family, but we must be careful not to restrict our view to this depiction. Why?

The holy family are held up as a model to us of family life and its importance. Whilst the holy family is of course unique in having two saintly parents and a baby who was the Son of God, Jesus was fully incarnate as a human being. He didn't merely play at being part of a family for a moment in time, but was born and grew up with his parents until he was an adult and life for them was far from easy at times. We must be careful not to put the holy family on so high a pedestal that we can't then connect or relate their home and family life to ours.

Christmas tends to be portrayed in the media as a time for families. Yet in reality, it can be a rather more mixed experience. Parents worrying about what they can afford and getting into debt. Family members arguing with each other as tensions rise when they're in close proximity with one another. Christmas is a time when the wounds of bereavement and loss can become raw and open. And of course some homes are very far from happy or safe places for people to live.

Probably for most of us, Christmas is a mixed bag. There'll be moments of real joy and hope and moments of stress and challenge.

So how can the holy family model family life for us and why is that important?

First, we're not called by God to be in isolation, but from the moment we become Christians we become part of the family of the church. This is true on a local, diocesan, national, universal and eternal sense! Whilst

the church is the body of Christ, it is also made up of individual human beings, with all their strengths, weaknesses and little quirks. This means that the life of the local church can sometimes include grumbles, competitiveness and people getting annoyed or frustrated with one another. This is normal human behaviour and we shouldn't be surprised, and yet the holy family remind us that we shouldn't just be content with the trickier side of parish life. We must work at a different way. Christ told us to love one another as he loves us.

In Chichester, Bishop Martin often talks about the diocese as the 'household of faith'. We might hold different theological positions on certain issues or aspects of the faith, but we're part of one household and called to live with one another, striving to support, love and pray for each other. If someone leaves the household, we should mourn their loss.

More widely still, we're also part of the Church of England, with all its peculiarities and exasperating sides. Here too we're called to love one another and be patient and kind. We're also of course part of the universal church, called by the one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit; bound together with Christians throughout all time and eternity.

Whatever our situations at home, we're drawn by adoption through baptism into this family of the church.

In the reading we've heard from Genesis, God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. Abraham and Sarah of course had their son, Isaac. From him came many biological descendants. Yet, when God speaks of descendants, he's speaking not just of biological descendants but all who follow in the faith of Abraham.

So descendants come in various ways: some biological; some by choice because they're not able to have biological children of their own, but who choose to adopt. Joseph wasn't of course Jesus' father, but he adopted him and treated him as his beloved son, living as any good earthly father would. Most of the first chapter of Matthew's gospel is setting down the lineage of Jesus back to Abraham and David, but it's through adoption into Joseph's line that Jesus is heir to the throne of David. So, clearly in God's eyes, adoption is as valid a form of being a family as biology.

Second, the very short gospel for today makes it clear that Jesus' home with Mary and Joseph was a place of nurture and growth. A place where Jesus was able to grow to maturity and be filled with wisdom. The holy family model for us the importance of the home as the 'little church' a place where children can learn how to live and love. Where they can learn to love God and neighbour. Some of good parenting is about little things that go largely unnoticed, its perhaps not insignificant that Joseph's profession was as a humble carpenter.

The gospel reading begins with Mary and Joseph taking Jesus to the temple to be purified because they were law-abiding Jews. Luke tells us: 'When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.' In other words, there's a link between what they did according to the law and their family life.

Of course in saying this, parents can't force their child to be practicing Christians and as parents we must let our child go and make their own decisions and even mistakes. There's certainly an element of letting go that we see in the gospels. When the child Jesus was lost and eventually found in the temple, he rebukes his mother who understandably was worried for him. Yet through the rest of his life, we periodically see Mary there being alongside Jesus, through good times and testing times. As family members, like the holy family, sometimes all we can do for our loved ones is to 'be there', a

loving presence, whatever happens. We see them modelling fidelity to God and to one another.

Third, we can see in Mary and Joseph an openness to God's call and his intervention. Both Joseph and Mary were visited by an angel, who had unexpected news for them. Both listened carefully and then responded. Again, as part of the Christmas story, Joseph has a second vision of an angel telling him to flee with his family to Egypt because Herod was plotting to kill Jesus. Again, they listened and responded, becoming refugees until it was safe to return to their home.

For a Christian family, God is an essential part of the household. Mary and Joseph allow God to lead them and trust him to do so in the right way. This didn't of course mean an avoidance of pain and difficulty. From the moment the angel visited them the journey ahead was complicated and in many ways challenging. Whilst our family life is likely to look rather different, its quite reassuring to know that the holy family didn't have a smooth and easy life together and that things sometimes took an unexpected and challenging turn.

What we do see in Joseph and Mary is them putting their complete trust in God and still rejoicing in the joy and love that was at the heart of everything. One of the hardest parts of being a parent or family member is standing by when your loved one suffers, is in pain or even dies. Yet most of us would say that this doesn't take away from that joy and love in having the person in our life.

May St. Joseph and Our Lady pray for us. May the holy family be an inspiration for our own home life and for our family of the church. There will be times of challenge and pain and times when people will frustrate and annoy us. Yet God calls us into his family where love is at the heart of everything and where we're bound together through his Holy Spirit.