

# Parish of St. Theresa of Lisieux Stansted

## *The Little Flower Messenger*

Year A - SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - 4<sup>th</sup> December 2022

The Presbytery, High Lane, Stansted Mountfitchet, CM24 8LQ

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### Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

*'Repent, for the kingdom of God is close at hand.'*

**Mass book (P. 85)**

**1st Reading:**

*Isaiah 11:1-10*

**Psalms 71:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17:**

*In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails.*

**2nd Reading:**

*Romans 15:4-9*

**Gospel Acclamation:**

*Alleluia, alleluia! Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!*

**Communion Antiphon: (P. 87)**

*Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights, and behold the joy which comes to you from God.*

### A thought from Fr Liam...

Dear Friends

As news of the 2021 Census emerged earlier this week, the inevitable headlines rolled off the press the following morning exclaiming with great remorse that Britain was no longer a Christian country. A more accurate reading might report that on 21st March 2021 fewer than half of those who completed the census - 46.2% - identified themselves as Christian, compared with 59.3% in 2011. Religion is a multi-dimensional and rather complex phenomenon that such a blunt instrument as a census question can only but fail to adequately address.

If the census is too blunt a tool to gauge Christianity, then it does beg the question as to what might be a more accurate and authentic measure for our collective expression of faith. Faith we recall cannot simply be equated and reduced to religion for it is more a way of life. Moreover our Christian faith probably cannot be authentically or accurately measured in numbers, for full Churches in our past were too often accompanied by an embrace of the slave trade, and small mass attendances have so often been accompanied by radical social action and social change.

Perhaps a more accurate and authentic question than to 'measure' our Christianity today is uncomfortably right under our noses in the gospel: **do we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, welcome the stranger and visit those in prison?** It is perhaps by this 'measure' that we will be more accurately known, not by our response to question 16 of the 2021 Census.

I wish you and yours a blessed second week of Advent,

Liam



Please familiarise yourselves with the location of the fire exits, extinguishers, and assembly points at this church.

### **'Thought for the Week' from Pope Francis**

"More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved beyond the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat' (Mk 6:37)"

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49

### **This Week's Good News**

Dear Friends,

While only two Gospels mention the nativity, all four Gospels introduce Jesus with an account of John the Baptist's ministry (Mt 3:1-12; Mk 1:1-11; Lk 3:1-22; Jn 1:6-9). Matthew puts slightly greater emphasis on John's words than on his action of baptizing. He records a direct quote from John's preaching: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." There had been no prophet in Israel for four hundred years. But the people had no hesitation in accepting John as a prophet because he was like a burning torch summoning men to righteousness, a signpost to point men to God, and he had the authority of a man of God. Further, John wore garments of coarse camel hair and a leather belt like the prophets that we read about in Zechariah 13:4 and 2 Kings 1:8. He ate what was available in the rocky desert – wild honey and roasted grasshoppers – which was permissible according to Lev 11. The Jews expected Elijah to return prior to the coming of the Messiah (Mal 4:5). John's clothing of camel's hair and leather belt (2 Kgs 1:8) identified him as the fulfilment of that prophecy, and Jesus himself affirmed John's role when he said, "Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also, the Son of Man will suffer at their hands" (Mt 17:11-12)."

John's baptism by water was an external expression of repentance. What he insisted on was the internal expression, a repentance that bore real fruit: a turning from worldly values combined with generosity and love. As a sign of true repentance, John urged the tax collectors to "stop collecting more than what is prescribed," and told the soldiers to "stop extortion and false accusation and remain satisfied with your wages." In short, John's message was, and still is, a call for radical conversion, a demand for self-denial, sacrifice and loving service to others. We may have to put an ax to the roots of the resentments and biases in our hearts. We may have to winnow out our greed and overindulgence, and we may have to burn the chaff of our impatience. Even though John's preaching was characterized by scathing criticism, his call for reform was described in Luke's Gospel as "the Good News" because the arrival of the Messiah would initiate a new reign of forgiveness, healing, and salvation.

John the Baptist, the stern and uncompromising preacher, challenges our superficial attempts at change, demanding that we take a deeper look. Obeying the commandments is a good start, but we must also examine our relationships with others. We must mend ruptures and soothe frictions, face family responsibilities, work honestly, and treat our employers and employees justly. Start where you are, John says. Our domestic and social lives must be put in order. John's voice is sober and runs counter to the intoxicating voices around us today. He calls for rectitude and social consciousness. We must abandon our selfish thirst for consumption and, instead, be filled with the expectation of Jesus' coming. Therefore, following John's advice, let us celebrate the memory of this first advent, prepare for Jesus' new advent in our lives, and wait for his second advent at the end of the world.

Deacon Des



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# Advent Reconciliation Service

We are all warmly invited to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation together as a parish community in our **Advent Reconciliation Service** on **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30 pm** in our parish Church.

This is a beautiful and gentle way to celebrate this sacrament of healing and forgiveness as we prepare to celebrate Christmas, that also offers us the opportunity to support each other in our community as we journey together.

*All are welcome.*

## Christmas 2022



*Our parish masses over the weekends of Christmas and New Year are as follows:*

### **Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> December 2022	<i>Mass during the Night</i>	<b>6.00 pm</b>
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December 2022	<i>Mass During the Day</i>	<b>10.00 am</b>

### **Solemnity of Mary Mother of God**

Saturday 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022	<i>Vigil Mass of Sunday</i>	<b>6.00 pm</b>
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2023	<i>Mass During the Day</i>	<b>10.00 am</b>

*Everyone is welcome*

## Parish News

**Confirmation Course 2022/2023:** A reminder that the confirmation course starts this Wednesday (7<sup>th</sup> December) at 7pm in the church.

**Children's Service and Christmas Party Saturday December 17<sup>th</sup> 2022:** The Children's Christmas Service will be on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 12:00 noon and will be followed by the Christmas Party in the Parish Centre. All are very welcome to the service but please let us know if your child / children wish to attend the party so that we may cater for everyone. Please email us at [helenhall5@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenhall5@yahoo.co.uk) or phone 01842 879766 with your child's name and age as soon as possible. A voluntary donation of £3.50 can be given on the day of the party. We are very excited because Fr. Christmas has contacted us to say that he will prioritise a visit during this very busy time for him. There are invitations at the back of the church with further details. Please let Helen and Mark know asap.



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**Parish Charity Our Place:** Our Place, previously Anchor House, are looking for much needed donations of toiletries. Anything from toothpaste, shampoo, soap, shower gel, hand cream, body lotion, deodorant, toothbrushes, flannels, etc. for the people under their wing. If you are able to donate, please bring the items along to church where you will find a box in the entrance of the church to place your donations into. Any of these items will be very much appreciated and will be delivered to the charity before Christmas. Thank you so much, The Visions Group."

**Encounter:** The next meeting takes place on Friday 9th December at St Joseph's WCC from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The talk and discussion topic is 'The Art of Advent' a reflection on the previous weekend's readings, followed by a shared Advent Lunch at 12.30p.m. All welcome for all or part of the event.

### Catholic Social Action - Thought for the day.

"For the church, the many abuses of human life, liberty, and dignity are a heartfelt suffering. The church, entrusted with the earth's glory, believes that in each person is the Creator's image and that everyone who tramples it offends God. As holy defender of God's rights and of his images, the church must cry out. It takes as spittle in its face, as lashes on its back, as the cross in its passion, all that human beings suffer, even though they be unbelievers. They suffer as God's images. There is no dichotomy between man and God's image. Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being abuses God's image, and the church takes as its own that cross, that martyrdom." — Oscar A. Romero, The Violence of Love

Deacon Des

### Mass Times and Intentions

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR A		
Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup> December <i>Migrants Day</i>	Confessions: 5:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mass: 6:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Pat O'Leary R.I.P. (M&T Rhead)
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> December	Service of Word & Communion: 8:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>  Mass: 10:00 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	People of the Parish
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> December <i>St Ambrose</i>	Mass: 12:30 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR A		
Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> December <i>Gaudete Sunday</i>	Confessions: 5:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mass: 6:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	People of the Parish
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> December	Service of Word & Communion: 8:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>  Mass: 10:00 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Ronnie Jackson R.I.P. (The Jackson family)



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