

All Saints

NETTLEHAM PARISH CHURCH

St. Mary's

RISEHOLME PARISH CHURCH

The Good News from Nettleham

Sunday 1st December

Advent Sunday

No 126

Father Richard writes...

Advent Sunday, and the whole great wheel of our liturgy begins again to turn. It is the first day of the church year. The weekday cycle of readings and psalms starts again – this year is Year A in the Sunday cycle, following the life, ministry and legacy of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew.

We sometimes confuse Advent with Lent – they are both identified with austerity, self examination, darkness and getting ready for one or other of the church's two great festivals. And purple. But Advent's darkness is about seeking light. Advent's emphasis is on waiting. On looking forward. The commercial world thinks we have started Christmas, but the lights, the gifts, the excitement of Christmas morning are all the better if we have been full of anticipation. As a child, the worst Christmas I had was the one when I had found my presents at the back of my parents' wardrobe weeks before.

Christmas is also better if you have had not only the secret and expectation, but also worked on the Christmas yourself. Materially, writing cards and sending them in love, planning and preparing festive food, choosing and buying and wrapping presents, should make the Christmas experience all the richer and more personal. Sadly, in our busy world, we all too often see these things as chores. We need to make real, intentional, loving, prayerful time to do them. Then they will be gifts not just to our loved ones but to God.

We've got lots to do as a church to prepare for the celebration of God's love for us in coming into our world at Christmas. The outside crib is already in place, and much thanks to the team that assembled it and the keen group of our young teenagers that populated it with figures – with a very poignant hint of the homeless and the refugees. It reminds us better even than the Glühwein, the burgers, the lights and the Christmas Tree, what this season is really about.

Not everyone is looking forward to Christmas. Those who are alone, those who are afraid, those who are struggling, those who are short of money, and those who are facing a Christmas at home without a loved one who has died recently, are often negative about Christmas. We try to do our best to understand and to help. Next Saturday we are joined in our church by others from the deanery, and through the good offices of Co-operative Funeral Services, for a reflective service of remembrance. There will be some carols, and readings, and candles, and I do hope both those who are grieving or anxious, and those who would like to show love, care and support, will join us on Saturday.

In the whirl of Christmas preparation, and against the noise of the news, do find some time to pray, to reflect on the extraordinary story we are telling, to listen to God and each other, and let's make this season of God's gift to the world, a time of joy and love.

Quote of the week.....

A Message From The Dean of Southwark, The Very Reverend Andrew Nunn, whose cathedral is close to the place of the latest terrorist violence in London. I was ordained there, and it is close to my heart.

It is hard to begin to come to terms with the fact that there has been another attack on the community in the London Bridge area.

I was just returning to the Cathedral after leading a retreat on the 'Four Last Things' – heaven, hell, death and judgement – meaty topics as we approach Advent. As I walked along Clink Street it felt as though time had suddenly shifted and I was back two and a half years ago as I was faced again with people literally running away from the direction of the Cathedral. I, of course, went against the tide and got into the Cathedral just as a lock-down was being put in place.

People who had come to the Friends' Christmas Market, visitors to the Cathedral as well as our wonderful staff and volunteers were all locked down. A visiting organist began playing some gentle and calming music. I led prayers with all those there, seeking to reassure them without really knowing what was happening.

The news filtered through and as it did the police decided we were better evacuating the building. So we evacuated the place and left the cathedral behind as a cordon was thrown up around it, once again. Now we know more, that the assailant was killed by the police after attacking a number of people, two of whom have subsequently died. Our prayers are for all of those caught up in the events, our admiration is for those, civilians and police, who went to the defence of others and risked everything in doing so.

We know that Southwark Cathedral, London Bridge and the Borough Market are special places, embodying so much about the nature of our great city, holding to a belief in the strength that comes through diversity, always knowing that acts of terror can never defeat acts of love – but at the moment it hurts.

As soon as we know when the Cathedral will be open we will let you know. But we don't need walls in which to pray. God walks with us and in just a few weeks we will look into a manger and see just how vulnerable God is prepared to become in order to be 'one with us'. So pray with us please, remembering the dead, the injured, the traumatised and their families.

Prayer of the week...

God of unfailing compassion,
make us strong in the face of terror,
loving in the presence of hatred,
bold in our diversity,
always knowing that your hand holds us and your life sustains us,
today, tonight and always Amen.

In need of prayer....

Doris Coleman, Lynne Combes, Etienne Salt, Hugh Carter, Arielle Salt, Graham Chapman, Barry Crum, Heather Haynes, Chris Wooster, Jean Dewar, Julian Ellin, Harriet Rich and Ben Comins.

RIP....

We give thanks for the lives, pray for the souls and ask comfort for the relatives and friends of Eileen Briggs and Brenda Boulter.

Year's Mind

Robert Tompkins (2018)
Phyllis Lammin (2011)
Doris Beckers (2007)

Albert Brame (2007)
David John Ross (2007)
Dorothy Painter (2007)

Week commencing 1st December...

Sunday	Advent Sunday
8.00am	Said Eucharist
9.30am	Parish Sung Eucharist
3.00pm	Christmas Festive Market – A welcome in church from 3-7 No Cuppatime, Worship@4 or Evening Prayer
Monday	<i>Feria</i>
2.00pm	Riseholme PCC meeting at 30 Washdyke Lane
Tuesday	<i>Francis Xavier, missionary, 1552</i>
9.30am	Ducklings
11.30am	Said Eucharist CW
2.00pm	Craft and Natter in the Parish Centre
Wednesday	<i>John of Damascus, monk, teacher of the faith, c749; Nicholas Ferrar, deacon, founder of the Little Gidding Community, 1637</i>
12 noon	BCP Holy Communion
Thursday	<i>Feria</i>
9.30am	CW Eucharist, followed by coffee in the Parish Centre
10.30am	Advent Bible Study – The four Advent candles – 2. Prophets
Friday	<i>Nicholas, bishop, c326</i>
12.00pm	CW Eucharist
Saturday	<i>Ambrose, bishop, teacher of the faith, 397</i>
5.30pm	Service of remembrance at Christmas
Sunday	Advent 2
8.00am	Said Eucharist
9.30am	Sung Eucharist
3.00pm	Cuppa Time
4.00pm	Worship@4
6.00pm	Evening Prayer

Weekday Morning and Evening Prayer – 9.00am and 6.00pm

Readings Sunday 8 December – Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 11.1-10 Psalm 72.1-7 Romans 15.4-13 Matthew 3.1-12

Future dates for your diary....

7th December – 5.30pm. A service of remembrance at Christmas in conjunction with Lincolnshire Co-operative Funeral Services.

15th December – 6.00pm Carols by candlelight at St Mary's Riseholme

21st December – 6.00pm Community Carol Service

Prayer Diary....

Day	Diocese, wider church	Parish
Sunday 1st Advent Sunday Charles de Foucauld, Hermit in the Sahara, 1916. World Aids Day.	Please pray that this Advent season will be one for the Church in our diocese of penitence and preparation as we rekindle our longing for the coming of Jesus to fulfil his Kingdom. <i>Please pray for mission agencies and their work throughout the Anglican Communion</i>	Almighty God, as your kingdom dawns, turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.
Monday 2nd	The Deanery of Beltisloe. Fr Chris Atkinson, Rural Dean; Vincent Hedley Lewis, Lay Chair. "Please pray for the Deanery of Beltisloe, and especially for the successful conclusion of its Pastoral Scheme. Please remember in prayer the Bythams and Withams Group of Parishes as they continue to work towards the appointment of a new priest." <i>Seoul (Korea): The Rt Revd Peter Lee; Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador (Canada): The Rt Revd Geoffrey Peddle</i>	Our clergy, Reader and Administrator <i>Pray for Fr Richard, Revd Judy. Bishop Nigel, Jane Hanson and Kath Pickering</i> We pray for the residents of All Saints Lane, The Rowans, The Chestnuts, Deepdale Lane, The Dene and Scothern Road.
Tuesday 3rd Francis Xavier, Missionary, Apostle of the Indies, 1552	The licensing of The Revd John Underhill to Skirbeck, St Nicholas. <i>Seychelles (Indian Ocean): The Most Revd James Richard Wong Yin Song (Primate); Eastern Oregon (USA): The Rt Revd Patrick Bell</i>	Our choir and organists <i>Pray for choir members, for our Choir Mistress, and our organists</i> We pray for the residents of Cotton Smith Way, Herrington Avenue, Lechler Close, Cooper Close and Aima Court.
Wednesday 4th John of Damascus, Monk, Teacher of the Faith, c. 749. Nicholas Ferrar, Deacon, Founder of the Little Gidding Community, 1637	Church Schools in Beltisloe Deanery: Bourne Abbey, Bourne Elsea Park, Colsterworth, Edenham, Great Ponton, Morton, Ropsley. The meeting of the Audit and Compliance Committee. <i>Sheffield (England): The Rt Revd Pete Wilcox; Sheffield: The Rt Revd Peter Burrows; Eastern Zambia (Central Africa): The Rt Revd William Mchombo; Easton (USA): The Rt Revd Santosh Marray</i>	Our churchwardens, sidespeople, readers and intercessors. We pray for the residents of Shaw Way, Heath Road, Monsford Close and East Street.
Thursday 5th	Bourne. Fr Chris Atkinson. "Please pray for the Ministry Team at Bourne Abbey and for our new authorised lay ministers. We give thanks for all those at the Abbey who work to build up the life of the church and the furthering of the Kingdom in Bourne." Transformation Fund Panel meeting. <i>Shinyanga (Tanzania): The Rt Revd Johnson Chinyong'ole; Eau Claire (USA): The Revd William Jay Lambert</i>	Charities we support and the FiSH project We pray for the residents of The Croft, The Crescent, Jubilee Court, Orchard Way, Kerrison View and Highfields.
Friday 6th Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c. 326	Castle Bytham, Little Bytham, Carey w. Holywell & Aunby, Creeton. In vacancy. <i>Shyira (Rwanda): The Most Revd Laurent Mbanda (Primate); Edinburgh (Scotland): The Rt Revd John Armes</i>	The Sacristy team and Servers. <i>We pray for the whole team and their ministry for us</i> We pray for the residents of The Steepers, Wold View and High Leas.

Saturday 7th Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Teacher of the Faith, 397	The Colsterworth Group: Colsterworth, Great Ponton, Little Ponton, N & S Stoke w. Easton, Skillington. The Revd Neil Griffiths. <i>Shyira (Rwanda): The Rt Revd Samuel M Mugisha;</i> <i>Edmonton (Canada): The Rt Revd Jane Alexander</i>	Our Family Church, Cuppa Time, Ducklings and their leaders. We pray for the residents of Brookfield Avenue, Midway Close, Riverdale, Ashtree Avenue, Ridgeway and Willowfield.
Sunday 8th 2nd of Advent. Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Please pray for the Church in her prophetic ministry of calling people to repentance and recognition of Jesus our Lord. <i>Pray for the work of the Mothers' Union around the world, and for Sheran Harper (Worldwide President) and Bev Jullien (Chief Executive)</i>	Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God. Amen.

Drivers: male or female urgently needed...

Following my recent medical problem and surgery, I have an automatic minimum 6 month loss of driving licence. This leaves our group seriously short of volunteer drivers to transport anyone needing a lift to and from the 9.30am Eucharist each Sunday. We have a rota that fits in with your availability and generally involves each driver once a month. If you think you could help or need more information please contact me, Hugh Carter, group organiser, on 752378 or speak to me at church.

Many thanks,

Hugh

No More Lying About Mary....

A radical perspective on one of the key characters of Advent, the Virgin Mary, written a couple of years ago by Nancy Rockwell and commended this week by one of our Archdeacons.

Advent, and the same old lies about Mary are slipping over pulpits and out of parish letters, Christmas cards, public prayers, TV holiday movies, and late night comics' jokes.



The subjugation of Mary, the maligning of her as meek, mild, and mindless, has been harmful to millions of women over many centuries.

Hiding within the wonder of Christmas are a thousand years of doctrinal female subjugation, doctrines that, like tinsel, are dripped all over the season of Christmas. In the midst of the celebration of Wonderful Life, these malicious ideas keep women from feeling empowered, invited to be strong, and urged by God to imagine new ways to live, as Mary of Nazareth did, who mothered God's redemption of the human world.

Luke's is the only gospel in which Mary's story appears, and in his account there is nothing submissive nor immature about her. According to Luke, the Angel approached her with words of great honour: Hail Mary, full of grace. Many artists paint the angel kneeling, in recognition of the honour given to her. The angel is explicit; the honour is for the grace that is distinctly hers. This is a courtship scene. The angel is wooing her, on bended knee, a suitor – not a constable bringing a decree.

It is Mary's grace that has attracted God's attention. And what is this grace? It is what Luke shows us in her conversation and her actions – courage, boldness, grit, ringing convictions about justice. Not submissive meekness. Grace is not submission. And the power of God is never meek.

Yes, she is startled by the presence of the angel. So were Gideon, Jacob, Jonah, and the shepherds of Bethlehem, to name a few, they who, like Mary, questioned the angel in wonder, doubt, and even resistance. They are noted for their reluctance. Why not she? What sort of greeting is this? she asked. And the angel obliged her with an explanation. Later, she challenged the angel: How shall this happen to me, when I have no husband? God chose a spunky woman.

Women in biblical stories appear in domestic settings. Sarah is in her tent, baking cakes. Rachel is drawing water at the well. Bathsheba is taking a bath. Martha is fussing around in the kitchen. The woman who lost a coin is sweeping the house. But with Mary, there is no evidence of any domestic work on her part. We never find her cooking, cleaning, washing up. The evidence offered us is her love of adventure. What we find her doing, over and over, is traveling, in journeys that involve risks and an element of danger.

Her recitation of the Magnificat is a political manifesto, delivered fairly publicly, in the home of an official temple priest, who is married to her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant, with John the Baptist. In Mary's manifesto there is evidence of deep thought, strong conviction, and a good deal of political savvy.

None of this gibes with the idea that she is a young teenage girl. The Greek word Luke uses for virgin is an unusual one, a very specific word that means she has not yet born a child. Its precise meaning does not indicate sexual innocence.

Luke does not assign her a specific age. And to insist she is under sixteen is to ascribe to God an attraction to underage women. Such details twist Mary's story and burden Christian women with a sense of selfishness if they postpone childbearing, a psychic demand to put childbearing first in their hearts, for God who seems to want nothing from them but pregnancy.

Mary is unmarried when the angel comes. The angel's invitation and her independent decision tell us Mary does not need permission of clergy – or her parents – to become pregnant. God knows Mary owns her own body. And there is no shame in her decision. Mary is good news for unwed mothers everywhere.

Mary, wanted by God, according to the angel, for her bold, independent, adventuresome spirit, decides to bear a holy child – for a bold agenda: to bring the mighty down from their thrones; to scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts, to fill the hungry with good things and send the rich empty away. This is Mary: well-spoken, wise, gritty.

Traveling alone, like every prophet before her, she sets out on her first journey, to her cousin Elizabeth's house, to declare her agenda. There will be more journeys: to Bethlehem; to Egypt and back; to Jerusalem when Jesus is twelve; to Jerusalem when he is crucified.

She gives birth in a barn, lies down with animals, and welcomes weathered shepherds in the middle of the night. She is determined, not domestic; free, not foolish; holy, not helpless; strong, not submissive. She beckons women everywhere to speak out for God's justice, which is waiting to be born into this world.

“We are all called to be mothers of God – for God is always waiting to be born.”
Meister Eckart, 13th c. German mystic.

Image above is **Annunciation**, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Understanding Eucharist: 3....

Last week we got to the end of the Gathering. In the section labelled **The Liturgy of the Word**, Common Worship tells us – the people and the priest:

- proclaim and respond to the word of God
- pray for the church and the world

We already established that what we do in the Eucharist is we gather to meet the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is our greatest love, then regularly meeting him should be our greatest joy. Joy for us, joy for others, and joy for God. The bible tells us, quite explicitly, that we meet Christ in the scriptures, in the breaking of bread, and in each other, both our sisters and brothers in Christ, and in the stranger at our gates.

In the Liturgy of the Word, we have a dialogue with God in God's holy scripture. The Old Testament shows us that we have a God who speaks to us, and we should hear and respond. Throughout all history, especially for the Jewish people, God has communicated. When we come to the new age of Jesus Christ, the Word becomes flesh. As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews says, Chapter 1, verses 1-2, *Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.* So we listen to this God who speaks to us, in his voice in the scriptures, and in the Word made flesh. Our own stories are important, but as Christians we have a greater story, and God has given it to us to hear – the creation, the fall, the prophets, the tribulations of God's people, the incarnation, the resurrection and the prolongation of the new creation in the foundation of the church. This is our story, and we must hear it, over and over again so it becomes part of us and we become part of that greater story. The emphasis on scripture gradually shows us that our own stories are nothing compared with the great story which is ours through grace. So we start with the Old Testament – the story of the history of the relationship with God that was the context in which Jesus described himself – read Luke 24.13-25, the Road to Emmaus. He explains who he is and then joins them in the bread.

Next we have a Psalm – in our main Eucharists, like the 9.30, it is sung in a version with responses, and the Psalms were written to be sung. This is not a musical interlude – the psalms are an essential part of scripture themselves, full of love for God, anger, frustration, joy, fear and all the emotions we have today. Even more importantly, we've just been drawn in to hear a story - we would surely want to respond! That is what we do here – and why the whole Liturgy of the Word is call and response. Then we have a reading from the New Testament – writings about the world of those who had met the risen Lord. Our Apostolic Faith is as inheritors of a church made by people who knew the Lord and are dying to tell you about it. Exciting stuff! A bishop once said "When Paul preached there were riots. When I preach they serve me tea!"

Then the reading of the Gospel, specially focussed on the Jesus we have come to meet. We treat this speaking from the life of Christ with the greatest respect, often with an Alleluia, by taking the book to the heart of the people, by standing. And we respond together simply "This is the Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you, O Christ". And then we sit and we respond through the exploration of the relevance of the gospel in our own situation offered in a sermon. Bishop Robert Barron says the preacher unpacks the word we have just heard, but also channels back to God all our concerns and anxieties.

Then, on Sundays, we say the Creed. Not an interlude, not a quaint old text but, our response in the Eucharistic dialogue. The creed summarises the whole biblical revelation and our response is "we believe". You heard the word, so now stand and say "Yes".

Finally, having heard all that God has done in history, in Jesus and in the early church, we confidently respond by asking God to do for us what we, in faith, bring to God in the Prayers of Intercession, offered to the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit's power.

Christmas Card Delivery....

We make a point of sharing our best wishes and blessings with the whole village at Christmas.

This year we have three beautiful pieces of print. We have a Christmas Card with a picture of the church covered in icicles and a list of services. We have a small postcard with times of Christmas services, ready to give out at the Festive Market and to use for other purposes. We also have a special card with events for children and families, which we will include in the mail drop, but also distribute through our schools, nurseries and our own all-age activities.

A huge thank you to Kath Pickering who coordinated this print job this year. Also to congregation member Katie Baxter, a professional designer, who designed the three cards for us. And to Ruddocks Printers, who gave us a really good price on 5,200 heavy, glossy and multicoloured pieces of print!

This week we need helpers at the Parish Centre to stuff some of these into envelopes – it creates a bigger impact and they don't get bent or wet. Volunteers please call Shirley.

The mail drop around all the houses in the village and Riseholme, needs the usual volunteers. We don't want to do it until after next Sunday, or they will be lost, forgotten and ignored. So please sign up and set aside a bit of time to go down a street and deliver, praying as you go, and greeting those you meet with the Good News of the gospel and the joy of Christmas.

Contact...

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Parish & Deanery Office open weekdays 9.30am-12.30pm

To discuss a baptism, wedding or funeral, please call Administrator, Shirley Keyes.

If you need to talk urgently to a priest, please call Fr Richard or Reverend Judy.