

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Parish Newsletter

Sunday 20 December 2009 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Flowers for the Church

Donations towards *Flowers for the Church for Christmas* will be gratefully accepted. Contributions may be handed in at Reception in an envelope marked “*Flowers for the Church*”. Thank you.

Readers Required

We need more readers for our Sunday and weekday Masses. If you would like to be considered for this very important ministry in the Mass, please contact Rita on 020-7727-6554, or leave your details at Reception and we will get back to you.

Visiting the Sick

If you know of any sick, elderly or housebound parishioner who would like a visit from a priest, please tell **Fr. Iain** at the Priory. He will be very pleased to pay a visit.

Our Repository

Please note our Repository at the back of the Church has got large stocks of items suitable for Christmas presents for your friends. So, if you are still searching for that last-minute gift for someone, or if you need some more Christmas cards etc., why not take a good look round the Repository after Mass.

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Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesdays from 6.30-8.00pm

Our Parish Newsletter on the Web: www.carmelitechurch.org

Weekday Masses: 8.00am, 12.15pm, 6.00pm
Saturday Masses: 8.00am, 12.15pm, 6.00pm (*Vigil for Sunday*)
Sunday Masses: 8.30am, 10.00am **Sung**, 11.00am **Sung/Latin**
12.15pm, 6.00pm **Young Adults Choir**

Holy Days: 8.00am, 12.15pm, 6.00pm
Bank Holidays: 9am, 12.15pm (no 6.00pm Mass)
Weekday Confessions: 5.30-5.50pm - Priest on duty except 12 Noon-3pm
Saturday Confessions: 10.30-11.45am, 3.30-5.50pm

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Elizabeth and Mary

Today's Gospel is a celebration. It is a story that makes us all feel good – good about being alive, good about being human, good about being people of faith. It is a celebration we are all invited to join. Here two women decide to celebrate; to express the joy, love, astonishment and wonder that is in their hearts. Their rejoicing is infectious and we all feel we want to join.

Both women are pregnant in unusual, risky and problematic circumstances. Elizabeth is an older pregnant woman with all the risks that go with that. Mary is poor, unmarried and in the traditions of the time should be severely punished and rejected. The doubts, worries and difficulties facing both women are totally set aside to let this celebration take place. There is not even a hint of the dark clouds that are hovering over these women. Only deep and developed faith can give the freedom that enables a celebration like this to take place.

These women have the insight and wisdom to see what it is they are celebrating. We need to remind ourselves of the source of these women's joy. In the hill country of Judah, Elizabeth and Mary are celebrating:

1. Pregnancy is one of the most joyful and hope-filled experiences known to humanity and no difficulties, worries or challenges should be allowed to compromise or diminish that fact. These women are affirming, supporting and celebrating what conception and pregnancy truly are.

2. Elizabeth is pregnant with the person Jesus will later describe as “*the greatest man ever born of woman*”. We are told that when Mary entered Elizabeth's house “*the child leapt in her womb*”. John in his mother's womb is the first person to celebrate Jesus. Therefore John is the first disciple of Jesus, the first one to recognise who Jesus is and the model for all of us who come after him. John also shows us from his mother's womb that the first and most important reaction of a person to the presence of Jesus should be joy and celebration.

3. Mary is pregnant with God Himself. Elizabeth is the first to recognise this fact: “*Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?*” Mary is pregnant with **the life of the world**. Mary is pregnant with the creator of life and the saviour of life.

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4. Both women are women of faith. The word of God has been conceived in their hearts and has come to life in their lives: *“Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled”*.

These words of Elizabeth sum up the faith of both women and are the source of all true Christian celebration. We gather in Church today, 2000 years after this event, because we believe that the words spoken to us by the Lord are real, true and have been fulfilled.

5. These two women are *“filled with the Holy Spirit”*. Therefore they can see with the eyes of faith what has really been conceived. The new life, the re-creation of humanity has begun. Humanity is pregnant with God, pregnant with new life, life that cannot end, life that will be the end of death forever.

We pray that our Christmas this year will be a true, real and deep celebration of everything that these two women are celebrating. We pray that the Holy Spirit will come upon us and fill us with joy, hope, faith courage, strength and everything else that these two women are showing us.

(Fr Matt Blake, Prior)

Filipino Christmas Mass

Our Carmelite Filipino Choir invite you all to their **Simbang Gabi Mass** this Sunday evening at 7.30pm in our Church. This is a traditional Filipino Mass in preparation for Christmas. Everyone welcome.

Carmelite Prayer Hour

We will have our **Carmelite Prayer Hour** tomorrow Monday 21 December from 6.30-7.30pm, guided by **St Teresa of Avila**, with Adoration and praying for the gift of vocations to religious life. All are invited.

Readers' Christmas Rota

Will Readers please remember to collect their new Rota as they leave after Mass today.

Christmas Masses and Services

Cards showing the times of Masses in our Church throughout the Christmas season are available from the back of the Church. Please take one as you leave after Mass.

Our Catechism Children's Nativity Play

Thanks to all the catechism children who participated in the excellent **Nativity Play** held in our Parish Centre on Sunday last. A special thanks to the Catechists and the children's parents for all their creativity and hard work. A superb performance by the children !

Our Children's Christmas Party

Also thanks to all the children and parents who came to our Children's Annual **Christmas Party** on Sunday last, and sincere thanks to all who prepared the delicious food and organised the event. A happy time was had by all !
(Fr Matt)

Charity Concert on Sunday next, 27 December at 7.00pm

A group of 20 exceptionally talented teenage musicians called **‘Melodie Music’** from Soweto, South Africa, are giving a concert here in our Church on **Sunday next 27 December at 7.00pm**. The concert will be a combination of Classical, Christmas and African music. Entrance is free but we will take up a collection for the charity that supports the work of ***giving the opportunity to disadvantaged children to learn music***. Please tell anyone you know who is in London for Christmas to come along – it promises to be something very special and a nice addition to your seasonal entertainment.

Notices

- * You are all invited to our **Parish Gathering** after the 10.00am Mass this morning. Please join your friends downstairs in the Parish Centre for tea/coffee and friendly chat.
- * We will have our *Parish Advisory Group Meeting* this evening at 7.00pm. If there are any matters you would like raised, do please hand them in at Reception, attention Fr Matt.

Our Newsletter

There will be a further Newsletter this coming week, available on Christmas Eve, following which it will go on Christmas break until Sunday 10 January. For those of you who are going away shortly, please remember to pick it up from our website: www.carmelitechurchch.org