

December '09

Thursday	24	Christmas Eve
Friday	25	Nativity of the Lord – Christmas Day
Saturday	26	St Stephen, Protomartyr
Sunday	27	Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph
Monday	28	Holy Innocents, Martyrs
Tuesday	29	St Thomas à Becket

January 2010

Friday	1	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Saturday	2	SS Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen
Sunday	3	Epiphany of the Lord

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. Also there are copies of the *Westminster Year Book* still available.

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 (<i>Vigil for Sunday</i>)
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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OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Parish Newsletter

24 December 2009, Christmas Eve – 9 January 2010

‘Today a Saviour has been born to you’

“*Caesar Augustus issued a decree*” – with these words St Luke begins his account of the birth of Jesus Christ. Caesar Augustus, of course, never heard of Jesus – Joseph, Mary and Jesus are just another anonymous family in a remote outpost of his vast empire. However, decisions taken by this Emperor are the reason Mary must give birth in a stable, a long way from home, in poverty, vulnerability and great danger. The plight of this family would probably be called “collateral damage” in modern political jargon. The first people to hear of this birth are shepherds “*who lived in the fields and good it in turns to watch their flocks during the night*”. The shepherds and Caesar Augustus live in the same world, the same era of history and are part of the same Roman Empire, yet their lives are worlds apart. God has chosen that it will be the shepherds rather than Caesar Augustus or any other figure with power, authority or money who will be the first to hear the greatest news humanity has ever heard: “*Today a saviour has been born to you*”.

The two biographical details we are given about the shepherds tell us so much. “They live in the fields” – therefore they are poor, homeless and isolated. “They take it in turn to look after their flocks” – therefore they are hardworking and responsible people. It is to these people that the saviour has been born: people with needs, whatever those needs are – physical, spiritual, economic cultural, emotional etc., and people who are prepared to take responsibility, make their contribution to society, to work, be generous, hospitable etc.

It is into this world with its mysteries, contradictions, failures, suffering, struggles, deprivations and pain that **a saviour has been born**. The shepherds symbolically stand for all of us, all who are in need of salvation, all who are open to hearing “*news of great joy*”. God has not been born into our world to solve our world’s problems, that we must do ourselves. Rather his birth communicates to us in the most radical way possible the message that God understands. God is born in poverty, vulnerability and danger. He welcomes the shepherds of the world and He understands our world with all its complications, contradictions and compromises. We are saved by a God who is one of us, one with us in all our pain and struggles and who shares our one destiny.

Caesar Augustus with all his power, wealth and honour could never have understood that he needed a poor and vulnerable new-born baby in order to be saved. Caesar Augustus could never have seen that his future destiny depended on this little baby.

As we look into the crib today, we see before us an image of our world. We see before us a parable of human life. We are controlled, deceived and manipulated by the most powerful, we are saved by the most vulnerable – life has not changed much in 2000 years, human nature is still the same and how we treat each other is still subject to similar traditions, hierarchies and prejudices. Likewise, God still acts in the same surprising, awesome and challenging ways. He enters our world and our lives today where we are most in need. He fills our hearts and minds with peace, joy and hope through the most astounding and unexpected means.

Fr Matt Blake, Prior

Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Vincent Nichols

You will find in your Newsletter today a **Pastoral Letter** from Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, prepared for the **Feast of the Holy Family**, which takes place on Sunday next 27 December. You are all invited to take it home with you and read it carefully.

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.

Flowers for the Church for Christmas

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.

Christmas Message from the Carmelite Community

We would like to welcome all who come to pray and celebrate with us this Christmas. We welcome in particular all our parishioners and friends - may this Christmas be a time of special grace and joy for all of us. A special welcome to all the visitors who will be joining us this Christmas. It is one of the great riches of this Church that we always have a great number of visitors. We pray that your time with us, even if it is very short, will be special, meaningful and enriching.

All our sick and housebound are very much in our prayers this Christmas. We pray especially for those who must spend Christmas in hospital. May the newborn Saviour be a source of strength, healing and encouragement for you. Christmas is a special time for families and we greet all our families and children this Christmas. Our prayers and best wishes are especially with families who have newborn babies. Families experiencing particular difficulties are assured of our support, friendship and prayers.

This Newsletter is read by many people on the internet. Wherever you are in the world this Christmas, we are united with you in prayer and Christian celebration. You are very much part of our community and may the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Let us pray for each other: *Father, the child born today is the saviour of the world. He made us your children. May he welcome us into your kingdom where he lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. Amen*

Fr Fabian, Fr Colin, Fr Lazarus, Fr John, Fr Iain, Fr Matt

Bank Holiday Reminders

Please note that on Saturday next 26 December, Feast of St Stephen - traditionally a Bank Holiday – our Church remains open all day and Masses will be at the usual times, 8.00am, 12.15pm and *Vigil* at 6.00pm.

Monday 28 December and Friday 1 January, are Bank Holidays, and Masses will be at 9.00 & 12.15pm. The Church will close at 1.00pm, on both days. There will be no 6.00pm Mass.

Cards showing the times of Masses throughout the Christmas season are available from the back of the Church. Please take one home with you.

Our Newsletter is going on Christmas break from today until Sunday 10 January.