

# OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

## Parish Newsletter

Sunday 21 December 2008 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

### Dec *Feasts/Memorial*

Wednesday	24	Christmas Eve
Thursday	25	Nativity of the Lord – Christmas Day
Friday	26	St Stephen, Protomartyr
Saturday	27	St John, Apostle & Evangelist

### *Readers Required*

We need Readers for occasional readings at the 8.30am Mass on Sundays, plus certain weekday 12.15 and 6.00pm Masses. If you would like to be considered for this very important ministry in the Mass, please contact Rita on: 020-7727-6554.

### *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.

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Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesdays from 6.30-8.00pm.  
(not on 24 & 31 December)

**Our Parish Newsletter on the Web:** [www.carmelitechurch.org](http://www.carmelitechurch.org)

Weekday Masses:	8am, 12.15pm, 6pm
Saturday Masses:	8am, 12.15pm, 6pm ( <i>Vigil Mass for Sunday</i> )
Sunday Masses:	8.30am, 10am, 11am <i>Sung/Latin</i> 12.15pm, 6pm <i>Young Adults Choir</i>
Holy Days:	8am, 12.15pm, 6pm
Bank Holidays:	9am, 12.15pm (no 6pm Mass)
Weekday Confessions:	5.30-5.50pm (Priest on duty except between 12 Noon-3pm)
Saturday Confessions:	10.30-11.45am, 3.30-5.50pm
<b>Carmelite Priory, 41 Kensington Church St., London W8 4BB</b>	
<b>Tel: 020-7937-9866 Fax: 020-7938-1470</b>	
<b>Registered Charity No: 253645.</b>	

### *“The Word was made flesh, He lived among us”*

This is how John’s Gospel expresses what we celebrate at Christmas. John has already told us who the Word is: God, life, light, the One through whom everything was created. Now the Word becomes flesh, human, just like every one of us and lives among us, makes his home among us, pitches his tent among us. This astonishing statement transforms our image of God. In addition it transforms our whole understanding of what it means to be human. If God chooses to be human, to live among humans, to make his home in human life, then what does that say about what it means to be human? What does it say about the dignity, worth, preciousness of human life? What are the implication of that for how we live?

The most important question for us today is: Why do we find it so difficult to accept this and live by it? Imagine a world where everyone believed that God became flesh, lives with us and is one with us: there would be no more wars, exploitation, greed, hatred – we could create an enormous list of what there would no longer be! What stops us? The answer may seem complex but I suggest the heart of the answer is Fear. We are afraid of the consequences and implications of taking what we celebrate at Christmas seriously. We are afraid to allow Christmas happen in our lives, thoughts, attitudes, life styles, relationships and decisions.

Fear keeps even those of us who consider ourselves Christians at that uncomfortable crossroads between belief and unbelief, between being friends of God and strangers to him. The following words from St Edith Stein puts this so well: *“Just as the first human beings could fall from being children of God to strangers of God, so each of us hovers constantly on the cutting rim between the void and the fullness of divine life. And sooner or later we begin to realise this”*.

One person who did realise this was Joseph; that is why we read in Matthew’s Gospel that the Angel says to him: *“Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife”*. From the very beginning, fear has been the great obstacle to the total acceptance of Jesus. The following words, also from St Edith Stein, help us to reflect upon this mystery and give us a way of enriching our Christmas experience: *“ ‘And the Word became flesh’. That truth became a reality in the manger at Bethlehem. But it was to be fulfilled in yet another form: ‘Whoever eats*

*my flesh and drinks my blood, has eternal life'. The Saviour, who knows that we are human beings and will remain human beings who have to struggle daily with weaknesses, comes to our assistance in a truly divine manner. Just as the human body is in need of daily bread, so also does the divine life in us require constant nourishment. 'This is the living bread which came down from heaven'. Whoever really takes this as his daily bread, experiences each day the mystery of Christmas, the Word made flesh. And this is doubtless the surest way to maintain constant union with God, to grow each day more firmly and deeply into the mystical Body of Christ'.*

It is in the Eucharist, then, that Christmas really happens. This is when God's Word, life, living bread, light etc. becomes one with our flesh, hearts, minds, lives. Christmas happens whenever a human being lives human life in union of life and love with God. We celebrate God becoming human and we celebrate human life becoming the place where God is to be found, discovered, known and loved.

The Word who became flesh at Bethlehem becomes our flesh and life gradually if we nourish it through his word and Eucharist. We pray that our Eucharist this Christmas may be enriching, life-giving and transforming. In other words, may it truly be a **Christmas** experience.

*Fr Matt Blake*

#### ***The Gospel of St Mark***

We will be hearing the **Gospel of St Mark** at most of our Sunday masses during the coming year. To help introduce us to this Gospel, **Fr Matt** will lead four sessions in the Priory. The dates are: January 6, 13, 20 & 27, all on Tuesday evenings at 7.30-8.30pm. All are welcome.

#### ***Mount Carmel: A Review of the Spiritual Life***

Please note that the Spring edition of **Mount Carmel – "Pillars of Carmel: Teresa & John"** is now available from Reception – price £2.50. This issue contains a wealth of articles on *St John of the Cross* and *Teresa of Avila*, by some well known writers. An excellent read for the holiday period and also to give as a Christmas present.

#### ***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.

#### ***Christmas Message from the Carmelite Community***

Firstly, we greet the many parishioners and friends who are celebrating Christmas in other parts of the world. Many of you will be reading this message on the internet. You are united with us in prayer and we remember you in all our Christmas liturgies. We welcome the many visitors who will be joining us for our Christmas celebrations. We pray that your Christmas with us will be an experience of joy and welcome, and a real meeting with the grace, love and mercy of God.

We pray this Christmas for all of you who are ill, worried, suffering or experiencing difficulties of any kind. We remember especially those unable to partake in the Christmas celebrations due to illness or age.

A very happy Christmas to all who come to this Church and to your families and friends. Thank you for all your generosity and friendship. At Christmas we look back over the past year and remember all the work, generosity and sacrifice of so many people that goes into making this Church and parish such a special place. You are all remembered, thanked and prayed for this Christmas.

*Fr Fabian, Fr Michael, Fr Iain, Fr Lazarus, Fr Arul, Fr Matt*

#### ***Notices***

- \* You are all invited to our **Parish Gathering** after the 10.00am Mass this morning. A good opportunity to celebrate Christmas together before people go away.
- \* *Children's Catechism/Holy Communion classes* have now come to an end for the Christmas break, returning on Sunday 11 January.
- \* Our *Babies and Toddlers playgroup* have now broken up for Christmas and will return on Friday 9 January.
- \* Donations towards **Flowers for the Altar for Christmas** will be gratefully accepted. Contributions may be handed in at Reception in an envelope marked "Flowers for the Altar". Thank you.
- \* Please note we will not have the usual *Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament* after the 6.00pm Mass this coming Wednesday, Christmas Eve. Carols will commence at 11.30pm, followed by Midnight Mass.

**Reminder** - your Newsletter will be on Christmas break next week-end, returning on Sunday 4 January.