

Fanciful Tales or Narratives of Divine Mystery?

Some years ago we were walking our two springer spaniels when suddenly two deer emerged from the bushes, came up the embankment, crossed over the path and disappeared into the bushes again. They were only 10 yards ahead of us but the spaniels had their noses firmly fixed to the ground. They weren't in a world of sights, they inhabited a world of smells! The deer passed by unnoticed, when the springers eventually got the scent the deer were no where to be seen!

Often we miss things because we "haven't got the eyes to see". Sometimes we dismiss what is really big & important because we can't understand a small little, perhaps inconsequential, detail in the "story". This is one of the major problems for Christianity in our culture today. One little difficulty, one misunderstanding and the whole treasure of over three thousand years of spiritual gift, wisdom and experience is instantly dismissed. And if we cannot discover any of the other gifts of Divine wisdom and love in the world we can be empty and aimless.

This is not only sad it is deeply damaging because without a spiritual wisdom which connects us to the Source we cannot negotiate the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" with hope and purpose. If we can find no other meaning than this brief span of existence it is difficult to resist desperate clinging and fatalistic despair.

The stories of Jesus' conception and birth are trying to express his connection with the Divine in terms of the relationship between God and the descendants of Abraham that unfolded over many centuries.

With our limited understanding, our disconnected experience and our undeveloped spiritual appreciation we don't see everything as GRACE. Our minds tend to stop short at physical, biological connection. We get stuck in "either or" thinking and have difficulty seeing the "both and". We have difficulty seeing through all the different layers of life and existence to the One who is the source of everything.

For the Gospel writers and for us it is of ultimate importance that we correctly understand the Gift that God is giving us in Jesus. This gift comes right from the being and heart of the Divine Mystery. Jesus is a gift of love and a gift of life and the whole purpose of the universe is to enable this gift to be given and to be received with joy and thanksgiving. That is why it is Good News. The biology, the legal relationships, the cultural and religious connections are all pressed into service to communicate this one central and overriding gift - Emmanuel, God Is With Us.

It would be a tragedy if our difficulties over the details in the story were to lead us to miss what it is all about. The most urgent task for the Church today is to communicate the Gift using all that is true in our current world view. We must also acknowledge that our understanding of the natural world is very different now from what it was in the past.. (DMA)

The Messenger

St Michaels Church, (SM) Langdown Lawn, Hythe SO45 5GR
St Bernard's Church, (SB) Southbourne Ave, Holbury, SO45 2NT

19th December 2010

Fourth Sunday of Advent Yr A- Divine Office: Wk 4

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| Sun | 19 th | 9am SB Mass; 11am SM Mass |
| Mon | 20 th | No Service (<i>Liturgy: of Dec 20th</i>) |
| Tues | 21 st | 10.00am SM Morning prayer & Mass (<i>Liturgy: of Dec 21st</i>) |
| Wed | 22 nd | 7.30pm SM Evening Prayer & Mass then Sacrament of reconciliation until 9pm (<i>Liturgy: of Dec 22nd</i>) |
| Thurs | 23 rd | 10.00am LT Mass (<i>Liturgy: of Dec 23rd</i>) |
| Fri | 24th | Christmas Eve 8.30pm St Michaels <i>Christmas Night Carols & Mass</i> |
| Sat | 25th | Christmas Day 9am St Bernards 11am St Michaels |
| Sun | 26th | The Holy Family <i>ONLY ONE MASS TODAY</i> 10 am Mass at St Michael's |

Mass Intentions: For this week: All members of the Parish, deceased clergy of the Province, all those who are unwell, John & Ruth Adams RIP Anniv., Mary Eleanor Cawthorne RIP, Julie Cowdrey (Health), Charles Duffy RIP Anniv., Mr & Mrs Lamb, Sandy & Oliana Nicholas,

For the week beginning 26th Dec: All members of the Parish, Benefactors of the Clergy Retirement Fund, Contributors to the "Living Our Faith" Campaign, Bishop Crispian Hollis

New Forest East Pastoral Area - Sunday Mass Times

St Theresa, Totton - Sat Vigil Mass 6pm; Sun 10.30am
Ashurst Community - Sun 9am
Our Lady & St Edward, Lyndhurst - Sun 9am

WATERSIDE CATHOLIC PARISH

Pastoral Team:

Rev David Adams (Parish Priest)
Rev Steve Bowler (Deacon) (023 8020 7449)
Rev Ian Tobin (Deacon) (023 8089 7354)
Kevin Barnett (Chair: Parish Pastoral Council)

All correspondence to: The Parish Office,
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website: watersidecatholics.org.uk



For the Ideal Gi visit
Faith, Hope & Charity
8 ST JOHN'S STREET, HYTHE SO45 6DA
Tel: 023 8020 7882

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK: Please keep in your prayers: Nigel Bolton, Marion Butler, Anne Candri, Petra Daniels, Ruth Freemantle, Pat Gallanagh, Amanda Gudge, Jim & Doris Lamb, Richard Moore, Sandy Nicholas, Bridget Reeves, Norma Rudd, Eileen Shanley, May Sycamore, Betty Williams, Anne Wyatt. (If you wish someone to be included for prayers here please give their name to Fr David.)

ADVENT REFLECTIONS: by Fr Ron Rolheiser are available on a handout at the back of the church. Fr Rolheiser is an internationally acclaimed spiritual writer and retreat / conference leader. His weekly column is published widely around the world in Catholic newspapers.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

On Wednesday, 22nd December Reconciliation will be available from after the 7.30pm Mass until 9pm.

TIMES OF SERVICES OVER CHRISTMAS

Friday 24th Dec, Christmas Eve - 8.30pm at St Michaels, Christmas Night Carols & Mass.

Saturday, 25th Dec, Christmas Day
9am Mass at St Bernards
11am Mass at St Michaels

Sunday, 26th Dec, Boxing Day

ONE MASS ONLY - 10am at St Michaels

THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING: As usual the collection at Christmas time is a voluntary contribution towards your parish priest's annual income. Your generosity in difficult financial circumstances is greatly appreciated. If you want further information about how priests are financially supported please read the leaflet at the back of church.

ST BERNARD'S: Preliminary Training for new Ministers of Holy Communion - 1 session only either Tuesday, 11th Jan at 7.30pm until 8.30pm at St Bernard's, or Saturday, 15th Jan at 12 noon until 1pm at St Bernard's. Those who kindly accepted the invitation to be Ministers at St Bernard's will begin their ministry from the start of February 2011. Please look out for your Rota which is available this weekend.

NEW PORTSMOUTH PEOPLE NOW AVAILABLE! See back of church.

CHRISTMAS POSTERS: are available to remind people that the real meaning of Christmas is celebrating the birth of Christ. They are donated by the Knights of St Columba.

DEDICATE A POINSETTIA PLANT: Please consider buying a poinsettia plant for display in St Michaels or St Bernards. Labels will be provided so that loved ones can be prayed for. Plants can be handed directly to the flower arrangers at St Michaels Church on Thursday (23rd Dec) morning; at St Bernards Church on Wednesday, (22nd Dec) at **9am only**

THANKS & FAREWELL TO FRANCIS

WADDINGTON: Sadly Francis will be moving away in early January to return to the family home where he can give more support to his mother. Francis has been in the parish over 20 years and has faithfully served the parish community in many ways: as a member and lately Chair of the Finance Committee and main accounts person, as a member of the St Michaels choir until recently, as a regular driver of the minibus for the school run until last year, and more besides. We wish him all the best for the future, lots of enjoyment on the Swanage Steam Railway and many blessings.

THANKS TO TINA & ALL THE VOLUNTEERS AT OUR FAITH, HOPE & CHARITY PARISH

SHOP: The shop has just been able to pay over to the parish the sum of £3000, and there will be more to come in the new year. Thanks to everyone for hard work, loyalty and constancy.

PLEASE EVERYONE SUPPORT THE PARISH SHOP. There are lots of new gift items, Fairtrade goods and scented & decorative candles and more besides.

THANKS FOR A MOST ENJOYABLE SENIOR CITIZENS CHRISTMAS LUNCH:

Special thanks to Win Cocker, her daughter-in-law, Sue, Tina Bowler, Veronica Chadwick, Linda Guilding, Liz Jones & Mary King. The food was lovely and abundant, the raffle great & everyone had an enjoyable time. Thanks to those who gave lifts to others.

WORK AT ST BERNARDS: The work has now been satisfactorily completed ahead of time. The area has been restored for parking but it would be advisable to let it settle for a while, particularly as we have had heavy rain recently. *The grassed area at the back near the trees is particularly soft & muddy & should be avoided!!* **Spaces immediately outside the church should be left free for disabled parking.**