



6th December 2019



Newsletter

Dear Parents,

Advent, a word derived from the Latin for "coming", is a period of time when we wait expectantly for the celebration of the birth of Christ. It is a time when we prepare ourselves to reflect upon the true meaning of Christmas. Our annual Christingle service which was held in church on Wednesday afternoon provided the an opportunity to do just that, as a school and parish community. Thank you for helping the children prepare their Christingles which, once lit, reminded us of the guiding light provided by Christ. We look forward to you joining us at more events over the next couple of weeks.



Senior Parishioner's Christmas Lunch

This was held on Thursday afternoon in our Parish Hall. The Holy Cross Choir entertained with a medley of Christmas carols while our guests were ably served by the House Captains from Year 6. We received many compliments about the "very polite and mannerly" children and the performances by the children in the choir. Indeed one guest said to me that we should be very proud of the children, which we are. Thank you to our many helpers, including Governors, and to our kitchen staff who, as ever, provided a sumptuous lunch for our senior parishioners. Well done everyone for making this such a memorable event for all.



Reconciliation

Years 4, 5 and 6 celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with Father Bernard this week as part of their preparation for Christmas.



Friends of Holy Cross

We wish to thank all those who gave so generously of their time to support the discos which took place on Tuesday and Thursday after school. They were very successful, the children thoroughly enjoyed themselves and the efforts of The Friends of Holy Cross were appreciated by all.

Harlow Education Awards

We are delighted to inform you that three of our past pupils received awards from Harlow Council for their progress whilst at Holy Cross. Dominic Nguyen, Stacey M'Imea and Harrish Muraleedharan were presented with their award by Brian Keane, the Chief Executive of Harlow Council, at the Harlow Playhouse on Monday evening. Their consistent dedication throughout Key Stage 2 has ensured this progression. Their great work ethic set an excellent example for their peers and will serve them well in the future. Congratulations for this well-deserved accolade from all at Holy Cross.



Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to the parents and children of Holy Cross who through their contributions will make children happier this Christmas. One hundred shoe boxes filled with gifts were collected on Thursday and are now destined to children less fortunate.



Carols Round the Crib

Next Tuesday, 10th December we will be holding our annual carols around the crib, which you are all invited to. You will have the opportunity to meet Santa, enjoy some hot refreshments, take some family Christmas photos in the photo area, enter the Christmas poster competition and listen to our choir. The choir will be singing outside around our crib at 4.30pm.

For the first time we are also holding a Night of Light, where you will be able to go into the church, light a candle and spend some time reflecting, sitting peacefully whilst listening to the choir.

The whole event will be running from 3.15pm to 5.30pm, with the Night of Light running from 3.30pm to 4.30pm.



Christmas Post Box

The Christmas card post box will open on Monday 9th December and will be located in the main school hall. Please remind your children to post their cards here and not to hand them out in class. They will be collected, sorted and delivered to the correct classes. Children, please remember to write the name of the child and the class they are in on the envelope.

Clubs

All clubs, apart from karate which runs until next Friday 13th December, finish this week. Clubs will recommence on week commencing 13th January.



Calendar of Christmas Events

Monday 9th December: Year 2 Carol Service at 2pm

Monday 9th December: Year 2 Carol Service at 6pm

Tuesday 10th December: EYFS & Year 1 Nativity at 2pm

Tuesday 10th December: Night of Light and Carols around the Crib at 3.30pm

Wednesday 11th December: EYFS & Year 1 Nativity at 2pm

Wednesday 11th December: EYFS & Year 1 Nativity at 6pm

Friday 13th December: Christmas Jumper Day

Monday 16th December: Key Stage 1 Pantomime (KS1 Children need a packed lunch)

Monday 16th December: Key Stage 2 Christmas lunch and parties

Tuesday 17th December: Key Stage 2 Pantomime (KS2 Children need a packed lunch)

Tuesday 17th December: Key Stage 1 Christmas lunch and parties

Wednesday 18th December: All children to have a packed lunch

Thursday 19th December: Children finish for Christmas holidays at 1.30pm



Class Hamper Reminder

If you haven't already done so, please bring in your contribution to your child's class Christmas hamper. Please bring in any item suitable for Christmas. If you wish to contribute a bottle, they can be handed into the office to avoid breakage.



Boccia Tournament

Last Friday morning a team of 4 children took part in a Boccia tournament at Mark Hall school. They played well reaching 4th in the first round and 3rd in the second round. In the afternoon it was the turn of our year 6 team who achieved the same results, 4th and 3rd.

Both teams showed great enthusiasm and represented our school beautifully. Well done to the following children: Lucy, Sophie, Sammy, Florian, Jenna, Marleah, Artiom and George.

Gospel Values Awards

Congratulations to the following children who received the Gospel values certificate this week.

1D: Julia Czarny

1S: Amelia Lach

2HD: Kayla Umaru

2TE: Layla Santos-Ebejer

3N: Conor O'Rourke

3P: Julia Magryta

4A: Mitchell To

4C: Cian Hanifin-Flynn

5G: Martha Edwards

5S: Summer Leagas

6E: Abbie Stopplecamp

6N: Niamh Edwards



ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Congratulations to **2HD**, winners of the KS1 Attendance Award for this week with a 99%. The winners of the KS2 Attendance Award is **4C**, who attained 96% attendance this week!

Attending school is so important and makes a huge difference to your child's learning.

It is essential you notify us of your child's absence by 9am either by telephone or using the Parentmail report absence option. We need full details of why your child is unable to attend school. We are frequently having to contact parents, to find out why their child is absent from school.

Parents of children below attendance targets will be invited in for a meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer.

R B	97%
R L	94%
1D	85%
1S	94%
2HD	99%
2TE	98%
3N	94%
3P	95%
4A	89%
4C	96%
5G	96%
5S	92%
6E	94%
6N	95%



This week in Forest school, we spent time looking at the different trees, studying which ones have completely lost their leaves. Although it was cold, we kept well wrapped up and made sure we warmed our bodies up first!

Some of the children used their plans from last week and began building their womerries and bug hotels. Year 3 children thoroughly enjoyed creating artwork using the many different colourful leaves. They built dens and shelters, pond dipped, collected firewood, used tools to dig, as well as finding lots of interesting creatures! Children all worked together by discussing, sharing and listening to each other's ideas.

Please remember to bring in any unwanted glass jars with lids.





*Celebrating the Year of the Word
with The Wednesday Word.
Encountering Christ - prayerfully
preparing for the Sunday Mass.*



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 8th December 2019 - The Second Sunday of Advent

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

The Gospel for Sunday 8th December 2019 - John the Baptist's Call to Repentance (Matthew 3:1-12)

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said: "A voice cries in the wilderness: prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight." This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, "Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'



3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

'Repentance' seems an unattractive word. It conjures up images of morose brooding over past sins and failures, a negative idea. This is not what John the Baptist proclaimed. His message was wholly positive. In Hebrew and Greek the concept of 'repentance' is about a change of behaviour, a change of direction. John is calling on his listeners to change their ways, to change their scale of values, their whole direction of life. To reinforce his message he wears the clothes worn by Elijah, the prophet whom Jewish tradition taught was to return to announce the final coming of the Lord. John proclaims his message in the desert, that apocalyptic landscape of the arid and bare Jordan Valley, below sea-level, where merchants would be crossing the Jordan on the road to the East. So John makes a deliberate claim to be this final prophet and to be preparing a way for the Lord. We see Jesus as the Messiah, the loving Saviour, but John was not at this point proclaiming this Jesus. He was proclaiming the threatening and imminent arrival of the sovereignty of God, when rotten trees would be cut down and evil swept away to be burnt in unquenchable fire. If we are to be open to the arrival of the Kingship of God, we may need to look to our own scale of values.

Is my scale of values compatible with those of the Kingship of God? How far do they coincide?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



**The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph**

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS +

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 8th December 2019



First Reading: *A Shoot from the Stock of Jesse*

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots: on him the spirit of the Lord rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is his breath. He does not judge by appearances, he gives no verdict on hearsay, but judges the wretched with integrity, and with equity gives a verdict for the poor of the land. His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless; his sentences bring death to the wicked. Integrity is the loincloth round his waist, faithfulness the belt about his hips. The wolf lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear make friends, their young lie down together. The lion eats straw like the ox. The infant plays over the cobra's hole; into the viper's lair the young child puts his hand. They do no hurt, no harm, on all my holy mountain, for the country is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters swell the sea. That day, the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples. It will be sought out by the nations and its home will be glorious.

From this reading the seven gifts of the Spirit are, rather artificially, derived. Seven is the perfect number, so this prophetic text intends to signify that the promised ruler will have all possible gifts of what we more generally call wisdom and understanding. He will be a ruler before whom one can stand in the secure knowledge that his judgment will be deeply fair and satisfying. The 'fear of the Lord' ensures that the ruler will govern in accordance with the divinely-ordered bases of creation. Just such a Ruler is the one we are waiting for at Christmas. It was surely these qualities which made Jesus such an attractive and charismatic figure, so that he could, as a wholly unknown stranger, pass those fishermen, and they would drop everything and respond to his call, 'Follow me'. Confrontation with his person was shock enough and inspiring enough to cure sickness. His simple word gave assurance of forgiveness of sin. His command reduced the elements of nature to serenity. In the second half of the reading we see the consequences of this rule: a return to the peace of the Garden of Eden. No more hostility, no more jealousy. Nature, even human nature, will not be red in tooth and claw.

What qualities do you find attractive in Jesus?

Second Reading: *The Generosity of Christ*

Romans 15:4-9

Everything that was written long ago in the scriptures was meant to teach us something about hope from the examples scripture gives of how people who did not give up were helped by God. And may he who helps us when we refuse to give up, help you all to be tolerant with each other, following the example of Christ Jesus, so that united in mind and voice you may give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It can only be to God's glory, then, for you to treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you. The reason Christ became the servant of circumcised Jews was not only so that God could faithfully carry out the promises made to the patriarchs, it was also to get the pagans to give glory to God for his mercy, as scripture says in one place: For this I shall praise you among the pagans and sing your name.

“The perfect generosity of Jesus Christ must be the model for our own generosity.”

Paul is here summing up his message to the Romans, a fragmented community of several house-churches, some drawn from the Jewish community, some from the gentiles. He has described and analysed Christ's work of salvation, the generosity of Christ in giving himself up for us, to win us back to the Father. Then he calls upon his hearers to imitate Christ's generosity. He speaks first to the Christians sprung, like himself, from Judaism, reminding them of the promises of scripture (the heritage of Judaism) which were to inspire them with hope, for God's promises are never-failing and sure. Then he reminds them with a string of quotations (only the first of which is given at the end of today's reading) that God's promises were intended for the gentiles too, so that they too should praise God's name. Why are we given this reading in Advent? Because the perfect generosity of Jesus Christ in taking on this work of our salvation must be the model for our own generosity, both to those who are our natural friends and to those who are not, and because it must be the basis of our hope; however neglectful and ungrateful we are, Christ's work for us cannot have been in vain.

In what way can I be more generous to prepare for Christmas, especially to those who are not my natural friends?

The Wednesday Word: Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God

w: www.wednesdayword.org

e: info@wednesdayword.org

RELIGIOUS LIFE AT HOLY CROSS



Based on the gospel for Sunday 8 December – Matthew 3:1-12

"John the Baptist appeared; he proclaimed this message...: 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.'"

John the Baptist appears, preaching in the wilderness, calling people to repent and change their ways.

We, too, are called to repent at Advent. To change our lives and to prepare a way for the Lord.

It is time to think about the times when we have not got things quite right. The times when our actions have had negative consequences, for those closest to us, for our community or for our world.

The times when we have placed our desires over the needs of our sisters and brothers living in poverty.

The times when we have prioritised convenience over the environment.

Let us all try to make a change, to live differently this Advent. Let us renew our relationship with God, with each other and with the earth, recognising that we are all connected.

Let us reach out to others with the help and support that they need to flourish.

Merciful God,
You sent John the Baptist to preach repentance.
Forgive us for the times when we have done wrong,
when we have hurt other people
and damaged our earth.
Lead us to make a change, to live differently,
preparing a way and making your paths straight.
Amen.

The Words of Pope Francis

Advent is a time for renewing the faith, for purifying it, so that it can be more authentic.



Happy Birthday to... Roman Dwarika, Draven Crow, Aimee Kuttin, Ellice Osei-Flint, Kenna-Kah Ajong, Erin Barker, Paris Goddard, Marcy Reddin, Lucian Rogozinski



Merit Certificates:

- 1D: Layla Still, for her fantastic maths work
 1S: Kayden Kureya, for outstanding sentence writing
 2HD: Jeremiasz Seiler, for such good singing in the Christmas concert
 2TE: Josie Ogbonze, for being an enthusiastic learner who is a kind and caring member of the class
 3N: James Jeffrey, for his excellent contribution during a science investigation
 3P: James Harten, for working hard in maths
 4A: Naavah Dixon, for settling well and making valuable contributions to our class discussions
 4C: Ronel Sofuwa, for his super work on the Polar Express
 5G: Draven Crow, for very good work in R.E. this week
 5S: Zofia Adamczak, for her excellent attitude to learning and producing good work in all subjects
 6E: Isabel Annobil, for a great attitude to her learning
 6N: Kerem Ahmetoglu, for his attitude to learning and working hard in all subjects this week

Diary Dates

Menu Week 1

<u>Monday 9th December</u>	<u>Tuesday 10th December</u>	<u>Wednesday 11th December</u>	<u>Thursday 12th December</u>	<u>Friday 13th December</u>
Year 2 Carol Service 2pm	Reception & Year 1 Nativity 2pm	Reception & Year 1 Nativity 2pm	Brentwood Carol Concert	Christmas Jumper Day
Year 2 Carol Service 6pm	Night of Light 3.30pm	Reception & Year 1 Nativity 6pm		6N Assembly 2.40
	Carols round the Crib 4.30pm			Karate 3.15 - 4.15

House Points

Congratulations to the winning houses St David

S. McGuigan

Miss S McGuigan

Headteacher

Please download our News & Events App for dates for the year. Details are available on the schools website under News & Events at www.holycross-pri.essex.sch.uk

Seew Kelliher

Mr S Kelliher

Deputy Headteacher