



THE NEWSLETTER



ALL SAINTS CHURCH Upper Norwood

**** January 2021 ****

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This is the first January newsletter for many years, so we wish you all a happy and hopeful new year with the prospect of mass vaccinations allowing us to return to our normal lives and reconnect with each other before too long.



The Vicar's Monthly Letter

Dear friends,

A new year always brings a sense of hope, doesn't it? The previous year with all its tragedies, problems, disappointments, failures, and sadness is now behind us, and a clean slate lies ahead.

Some of us are wrestling with important decisions that we must make or a task to be done; some know firsthand the powerful effects of disabling disease or worry about health issues in the upcoming months; some have had to deal recently with a major loss; some wonder if we can make it in the coming year without the presence of one who meant so much; some of us are feeling very lonely, in spite of people all around us; some of us fear growing older, or fear what the future may hold; some wonder if dreams will ever be realised, or whether the new year will be even more frustrating and filled with feelings of futility than the last. Many of us are feeling pain or anxiety this new year. When we feel this way, the temptation is to stay with the familiar and the comfortable, to crawl back into bed and pull up the covers, or to try hide in the manger with Jesus, where it's warm, safe, and secure. The temptation is to stay where we are – in the dark crevices of depression or defeat, of fear or foreboding, in the deep ruts of sameness, boredom, or lethargy.

But Epiphany with its emphasis on a light shining in the darkness, reminds us that life continues on, that revelation and growth and new beginnings loom on the horizon, that new roads appear up ahead, new roads that will take us, if we choose to let them, into new adventures, new challenges, new opportunities to be the persons that we have it in us to be and that God wants us to be.

However you are feeling as we enter this New Year I pray that faith may sustain you and help you in your journey and that we remember that we do this together as a community of hope.

With my warmest good wishes for 2021.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Leonard

CLERGY

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SERVICES

All Sundays

10.00 am Parish Mass

6.00 pm Holy Communion
 (Book of Common Prayer)

Tuesdays

7.30 pm Said Eucharist

1st Saturday of month

10.00 am Said Eucharist

Saints of the Month: January:

- 13th St Kentigern (Mungo): evangelist of Cumbria and Strathclyde.
- 17th St Antony hermit: lived in the Egyptian desert, his temptations are often portrayed in art.
- 20th St Sebastian: Roman soldier martyred around 288; patron saint of archers.
- 25th Ss Timothy & Titus: disciples of Paul
- 28th St Thomas Aquinas: Dominican theologian, one of the great doctors of the church.

6th January: Feast of the Epiphany (celebrated at All Saints on Sunday 3rd January)



Thought for the Month

Christ is revealed to all peoples. Wise men from the east guided by a star came to worship Christ. In them we see the homage of all the nations to Christ who is forever the light of the world. We too can become an epiphany – a revealing – of God if we lead full Christian lives.

... and a prayer

O God, our Heavenly Father, as we enter upon this new year we commit ourselves to your faithful care and keeping. Give us the grace to love you with all our heart and soul and mind and strength that we may live without fear, and so to love our neighbours as ourselves that we may live without reproach. As our days so let our strength be; and grant that no chance or change may turn us aside from the doing of your holy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Epiphany Traditions from Europe

It is said that travel broadens the mind; for those of us who enjoy travel – and are fortunate to indulge in it – the last year has been frustrating. We start the new year by a brief look at some seasonal traditions from three of our close European neighbours.

In some countries in Europe, it is on the feast of Epiphany that presents are exchanged in honour of the ‘three kings’, Christmas itself retaining its religious significance rather than the increasingly secular one.

In France the tradition is centred around the ‘*galette des rois*’ – a “cake” of flaky pastry with a filling of frangipane and almonds, or sometimes apples, and containing a *feve* – either a real bean or more often a little ceramic figurine – and topped with a crown of gold-coloured paper or card.

At the moment of serving the portions of *galette* to the assembled guests, the youngest child present capable of fulfilling the task sits under the table and chooses, as each slice is cut, who will receive it. The person who receives the slice containing the *feve* is crowned King of the Day and presented with the crown to symbolise his or her title. It is on this person that the duty falls of providing the *galette* the following year. The *galettes*, together with their crowns, are widely available throughout France at cake shops, and the crowns can be bought separately for those making their own *galette*.*



(Perhaps this tradition is reminiscent, certainly among the older members of the congregation, of the habit of putting a sixpence (pre-decimal) – or even further back a silver threepence – into the Christmas pudding.)

* Marilyn Davis has a simple but tasty recipe for *galette des rois* if anyone would like to try their hand at making one!



In Spain, Epiphany is called 'Fiesta de Los Tres Reyes Magos' 'The festival of the three Magi Kings'. Children have some presents on Christmas Day, but most are opened at Epiphany: children believe that the Kings bring presents to them at this time. On Epiphany Eve they leave shoes on windowsills or balconies or under the Christmas Tree to be filled with presents. Gifts are often left in return by children for the Kings: a glass of brandy for each King, a satsuma and some walnuts. Sometimes a bucket of water is left for the camels that bring the Kings! If the children have been bad, the Kings might leave pieces of coal made out of sugar in the presents!

Some big towns and cities have Epiphany Parades with each King having a big float that is shaped like a camel. Sometimes there are also real camels in the parade. Often the Kings throw out sweets to the children watching the parade.



An Epiphany parade in Seville



In Italy, on Epiphany night, children believe that an old lady called 'Befana' brings presents for them; children put stockings up by the fireplace for Befana to fill. In parts of northern Italy, the Three Kings might bring you a present rather than Befana. On Christmas day 'Babbo Natale' (Santa Claus) might bring them some small gifts, but the main day for present giving is on Epiphany.

One of the most important ways of celebrating Christmas in Italy is the Nativity crib scene. Using a Nativity scene to help tell the Christmas story was made very popular by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223, after he had visited Bethlehem the previous year and saw where it was thought that Jesus was born. A lot of Italian families have a Nativity scene in their homes from 8th December until the Epiphany.

The city of Naples in Italy is world famous for its Nativity scenes known as '*Presepi Napoletani*'. The first Nativity scene in Naples is thought to go precede St Francis, and was in the Church of S. Maria del Presepe (Saint Mary of the Nativity). Sometimes the Nativity scene is displayed in the shape of a pyramid which can be meters tall! It's made of several tiers of shelves and is decorated with coloured paper, gold covered pinecones and small candles. A small star is often hung inside the top of the pyramid/triangle. The shelves above the manger scene might also contain fruit, sweets and presents.



A Neapolitan Nativity Scene

One special thing about Neapolitan Nativity scenes is that they always have extra 'every-day' people and objects (such as houses, waterfalls, food, animals and even figures of famous people and politicians!). Naples is also the home to the largest Nativity scene in the world, which has over 600 objects on it.