

REJOICE – THE LORD IS NEAR!

(JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28)



Statue of St John the Baptist on the north side of Charles Bridge, one of the most famous tourist spots in Prague

John the Baptist is, in some ways, a transitional figure: he straddles what we usually call the Old and New Testaments, by which we mean the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

He looks backward to the prophets of the Jewish tradition, especially to Elijah, the figure who represents the prophetic tradition. On the other hand, he looks forward to the coming of the Christ and functions as his herald, announcing the near arrival of the kingdom of God.

In today's Gospel episode, we hear how John was a puzzle to those who shared his Jewish faith: was he, in fact, the Messiah? There seem to have been more than a few people who thought that he might well be. The leaders of the people send representatives to ask John to clarify his position, and he states firmly that he is not the Christ, whose sandal-strap he is not worthy to undo.

The New Testament writers clearly had a difficulty with the figure of John the Baptist and his relationship to Jesus. John was obviously a significant person at the time and so has a place in the Gospel tradition. The reading from the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, the first paragraph of our extract today, presents him as being sent by God – as a witness. No matter how important John was in his own right, his place in the tradition is as a subordinate to Jesus, and once Jesus appears, John's role comes to an end. We might remember that the most important person in the Gospel tradition is Jesus: all other characters, no matter how significant, are always presented in relation to Jesus and never in isolation, separated from him. ■

LEARN

In the Fourth Gospel, the term "the Jews" normally refers to the Jewish leaders who are hostile to Jesus.

In the Gospel according to John, "to believe" is to make a positive decision for Jesus and his teaching.

Priests and Levites are figures principally associated with the Temple in Jerusalem.

REFLECT

Someone once remarked that there is no occurrence of the word "faith" in the Gospel according to John. This statement is, strictly speaking, true. The noun "faith" is not found, but the verb "to believe" occurs well over 100 times. Faith, in this sense, is not something that we possess but rather something we do. The Creed which we declare together at the Eucharist is a statement of doctrine, but faith is essentially a relationship with God. The evangelist John tells us throughout his Gospel version that to believe is to make a choice: it is not a matter of logic, but rather a personal decision to accept Jesus and his teaching.

As we approach the celebration of the birth of Christ, we might reflect on this aspect of our Christian life. Sometimes cradle Catholics say that they envy people who come to the faith later in life, because they have had to make a conscious, adult decision for themselves in a way that others, born into Catholic families and raised in a Christian environment, never had to. At Christmas, we celebrate the coming of the light into the world. It is our choice whether we live in the light or not. We might make this Christmas an opportunity to renew that resolution once more. ■

SAY

Rejoice in the Lord always!
(Philippians 4:4)

DO

Look at the state of the roads around your town: how does their condition reflect your readiness to welcome Jesus at Christmas?





St Joseph's Catholic Church, Kilmarnock

THE SUNDAY NEWSLETTER

The Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday 13th December 2020

Parish Priest: Reverend Stephen G McGrattan

St Joseph's Presbytery, 15a Hill Street, Kilmarnock, KA3 1HB

Telephone: 01563 521832 • Web: www.rckilmarnock.org.uk

Parish office email and for newsletter items (by 10 am Thursday): kilmarnock.stjoseph@gallowaydiocese.org.uk

Fr McGrattan's email: stephen.mcgrattan@gallowaydiocese.org.uk

Facebook: St Joseph's Catholic Church, Kilmarnock

Parishes of the R. C. Diocese of Galloway (www.gallowaydiocese.org.uk). Charity number SC010576.

LITURGIES FROM SUNDAY 13th DECEMBER 2020

The Masses this week will be streamed as indicated below on the "St Joseph's Church, Kilmarnock" YouTube channel and are offered for the following intentions.

Date	Time	Gathering	Mass Intention
Saturday 12th	6.00 pm	Mass with a congregation (also livestreamed)	Suzanna Doherty (Spec Int)
Sunday 13th	11.00 am	Mass with a congregation (also livestreamed)	Jim Doolan (RIP)
Monday 14th	10.00 am	Mass with a congregation (also livestreamed)	James Dourish (Ann)
Tuesday 15th	10.00 am	Mass with a congregation (also livestreamed)	Esther King (RIP)
		Vigil Reception for Lewis Orr, RIP (not livestreamed)	
Wednesday 16th		Requiem Mass for Lewis Orr, RIP (not livestreamed)	Lewis Orr (RIP)
Thursday 17th	6.00 pm	Mass with a congregation (also livestreamed)	Alice Marie Murphy (Ann)
Friday 18th	10.00 am	Mass without a congregation (livestreamed)	Mary Collins (RIP)
Saturday 19th	6.00 pm	Mass with a congregation (also livestreamed)	Stephen Cusack (RIP)
Sunday 20th	11.00 am	Mass with a congregation (also livestreamed)	John Brady (Ann)

CONDOLENCES: The condolences of the parish are offered to the families of Lewis Orr and Jeannie McGill who died recently. May they rest in peace.

SCOTLAND'S BISHOPS PUBLISH A PASTORAL LETTER OF HOPE: In a National Pastoral Letter to Scotland's Catholic community, the Catholic Bishops of Scotland have highlighted "reasons for hope, as we live through these difficult times". The document, suggests society has begun to rediscover universal human dignity, pointing out that when citizens were asked "to make difficult and prolonged sacrifices for the sake of the most vulnerable and they willingly responded." The letter describes this genuine concern for the vulnerable as "obvious and beautiful".

The letter goes on to hope, that "the love and compassion we have shown amid so much suffering and death in recent months (might) now become a way of life and that love of neighbour might now become the vital principle of our culture".

The document also addresses the Medical Care of the Sick and Vulnerable, the economy and vaccines. The bishops welcome the news of vaccine approvals and "hope this will allow an early immunisation programme to protect our population and offer the prospect of some return to normal life." In response to ethical concerns raised about the vaccines, the bishops "reassure our Catholic population that, in accordance with longstanding guidance from the Pontifical Academy for Life, it is ethical to take any of the C19 vaccines purchased by the UK at the present time, either because foetal cell lines have not

been used in their development or because their sourcing is sufficiently remote." The Pastoral Letter observes, that "just as the nations of the world have been required to collaborate to respond effectively to the virus, so too in our own society we must work together for a better future as we rebuild after the Pandemic." The document is available on the parish website.

WELCOME TO THE SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY: The Sisters will arrive in Kilmarnock on Tuesday, 15th December to take up residence in the church house at Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

To welcome the Sisters there will be an extra Mass celebrated on Tuesday 15th December at 1.30 pm in Our Lady of Mount Carmel church. All of the Kilmarnock parishes are asked to be represented. Due to the Covid restrictions, if you would like to attend please request a place by emailing kilmarnock.stjoseph@gallowaydiocese.org.uk. Confirmation of places available will be given thereafter. The Sisters' names are Sister Mary Rose Confidence (Superior), Sister Mary Mabel, and Sister Marilyn Juliet. Their pastoral outreach will be to all three parishes of St Joseph's, St Matthew's and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Please pray for them as they prepare to live in our community of parishes.

One of the things the parishes will provide for the sisters is a suitable car. If anyone has a car they use little and were thinking of selling on, ideally two or three years old and family-sized, please speak to Fr Stephen.

Hall bookings: suspended until further notice.

Safeguarding co-ordinator: Margaret McGrath (01563 542130)

Crosshouse and Ayr Hospitals: Ask hospital staff to page on-call priest chaplain.

Collections this week: Standing orders: £754.54. Donations: £1,096. Building Fund: £292.

Scottish Catholic Education Service: £8. Mission Sunday: £20. Christmas: £5. SCIAF: £240.

Thank you for your generous support of the parish at this time and to all who have set up standing orders.

CHRISTMAS CARD DELIVERY: Due to the pandemic the Scouts will not be delivering Christmas cards this year. Also, in previous years people have left cards for other members of the congregation at the back of the church – you are kindly asked not to do this.

REQUESTING A PLACE AT MASS FOR CHRISTMAS: Masses will be celebrated at 9 pm on Christmas Eve and at 11 am on Christmas Day. The hall will be used as a separate place of worship which increases our restricted capacity. Booking is now open online (and by telephone only between 11 am and 12 noon on Fridays) for Christmas Masses and will close on Friday 18th December and will be confirmed by Monday 21st December. If everyone who wishes to attend is not able to be accommodated on Thursday 24th and Friday 25th then they will be given priority to attend the Vigil Mass on Saturday 26th December and Sunday 27th December. Christmas is a season and we will make every effort to ensure all who wish to celebrate Christmas at church will be able to attend during the Christmas season. Please make a booking request soon so the Mass arrangements can be organised in good time.

PROTECTION LEVEL 3: On Friday 11th December, East Ayrshire re-entered Protection level 3. This means the number of people permitted to gather in the church is 50. The church hall will still be available as an overflow where required.

Weekend Masses: You can request a place for the upcoming weekend through the parish website www.rckilmarnock.org.uk. Online bookings are open from Sunday at 6 pm until Thursday at 5 pm. You can also make a telephone booking by phoning the parish house on 01563 521832 on Friday from 11 am until 12 noon. Your booking will be confirmed by Friday evening. If you book a place and then cannot come to Mass, please phone or email the parish so another person eager to attend can be present.

Weekday Masses: No advanced booking is now required. The church will be filled until capacity is reached.

Thank you to the stewards who also disinfect the church (and now the hall) after every gathering. Without their ongoing commitment we would not be able to gather at all.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION FOR CHILDREN IN PRIMARY 4: After a time of uncertainty, we can now look ahead to the celebration of Confirmation and Holy Communion for the primary 4 children. Fr Stephen has written to the parents of the children who made the sacrament of Reconciliation in March. Sacramental

preparations and celebrations will be more parish-based this year since larger gatherings will not be possible for some time.

Confirmation will be celebrated in St Joseph's in February 2021 on a date to be arranged after the New Year. The sacrament will be given by the priest rather than by the bishop.

It is very possible that a more normal gathering for Holy Communion can take place after Easter, even if this means waiting until June. Plans will be made and a date set around Easter (or sooner if possible).

In the meantime, children attending Catholic schools are being prepared to receive these sacraments in the usual way. Parents of children who attend non-denominational schools can request workbooks to help them prepare their children from Fr Stephen.

Attendance at Mass – even in these restricted times – is an important part of sacramental preparation. Families are warmly invited to book a place, even every two or three weekends, to restore the practice of coming to Mass.

If your child is of primary 4 age, and hasn't already enrolled to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Holy Communion, please contact Fr Stephen who will be happy to support you as you prepare your children to receive the sacraments of initiation.

There will be a Zoom meeting on Thursday 17th December at 7 pm for parents of children receiving the sacraments. If you haven't received the meeting link please email Fr Stephen.

SCIAF REAL GIFTS: Struggling for gift ideas? Why not give a loved one a gift that will help someone in greater need? See www.sciaf.org.uk/realgifts.

BE A LIGHT THIS CHRISTMAS (APPEAL CONCLUDED): Thank you for the many gifts of toiletries, chocolates, gloves and socks which have been received. They will be wrapped soon and widely distributed.

APPEAL FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR CHILDREN: Thank you for the gifts donated which will bring joy to many young lives this Christmas.

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL FOOD BANK: Thank you for the overwhelming response to the appeal for food parcels. Almost 60 parcels were donated by parishioners! This will be enough for over the Christmas period and, to avoid waste, we now ask that no more food parcels are donated until a future appeal when stock is low.

MINISTRY ROTAS FOR THIS WEEK

	Stewards	Cleaning Team between Masses	Writer of Bidding Prayers
Saturday 12th December 6.00 pm	Church: Helena Rameckers, Michael McGrath, Danny and Anne Gorman	Church: Helena Rameckers, Michael McGrath, Danny and Anne Gorman, Julia Rameckers	Margaret McGrath
Sunday 13th December 11.00 am	Church: Alan and Theresa Kerr, Paul and Elizabeth Nicholson Hall: Dennis Graham, Margaret McGrath	Church: Alan and Theresa Kerr, Emma Wood, Karen Cassidy Hall: Dennis Graham, Margaret McGrath	Margaret McGrath
Monday 14th December 10.00 am	Margaret McGrath, Roberta Murphy Danny and Anne Gorman	Margaret McGrath, Roberta Murphy Danny and Anne Gorman	
Tuesday 15th December 10.00 am	Helena Rameckers, Margaret McGrath, Alan and Theresa Kerr	Helena Rameckers, Margaret McGrath, Alan and Theresa Kerr	
Wednesday 16th December 10.00 am	Eileen Cunningham, Anne Gorman, Margaret McGrath, Clare Power	Eileen Cunningham, Anne Gorman, Margaret McGrath, Clare Power	
Thursday 17th December 6.00 pm	Paul and Elizabeth Nicholson, Anne and Michael Timmons	Will be cleaned on Friday	
Saturday 19th December 6.00 pm	Church: Helena Rameckers, Michael McGrath, Danny and Anne Gorman	Church: Helena Rameckers, Michael McGrath, Danny and Anne Gorman, Julia Rameckers	Hugh Matthews
Sunday 20th December 11.00 am	Church: Dennis Graham, Margaret McGrath, Emma Wood, Karen Cassidy Hall: Alan and Theresa Kerr	Church: Theresa Kerr, Margaret McGrath, Emma Wood, Karen Cassidy Hall: Alan Kerr and Dennis Graham	Hugh Matthews

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say,
rejoice.
Indeed, the Lord is near.

COLLECT

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,
enable us we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the
poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.
"I exult for joy in the Lord,
my soul rejoices in my God,
for he has clothed me in garments of
salvation,
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.
For as the earth makes fresh things grow,
as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord make both integrity and
praise
spring up in the sight of the nations."
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Luke 1

Response:

My soul rejoices in my God.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her
nothingness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.
(R.)
2. The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him. (R.)
3. He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Thessalonians.
Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for
all things give thanks to God, because this is
what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.
Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the
gift of prophecy with contempt; think before
you do anything – hold on to what is good
and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect
and holy; and may you all be kept safe and
blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has
called you and he will not fail you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the
poor.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness.
When the Jews sent priests and Levites
from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"
he not only declared, but he declared quite
openly, "I am not the Christ." "Well then,"
they asked "are you Elijah?" "I am not," he
said. "Are you the Prophet?" He answered,
"No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We
must take back an answer to those who sent
us. What have you to say about yourself?" So
John said, "I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:
Make a straight way for the Lord."

Now these men had been sent by the
Pharisees, and they put this further question
to him, "Why are you baptising if you are
not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the
prophet?" John replied, "I baptise with water;
but there stands among you – unknown to
you – the one who is coming after me; and
I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap." This
happened at Bethany, on the far side of the
Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day

in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we
pray,
be offered to you unceasingly,
to complete what has begun in sacred mystery
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving
work.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do
not fear.
Behold, our God will come, and he will save
us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord,
that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of
our faults
and prepare us for the coming feasts.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The pilgrims continue to come. Only God
knows what each one of us brings, and with
what kind of heart. We come mystically to
this cave. We know the mess we bring and
the often distracted heart that brings it. But
this is all we have – all we are. One stretches
out his arms to receive.

Basil M Pennington OCSO