

Religious Education Newsletter - December 2023



As December arrives, we find ourselves already in the third week of Advent - our time of preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. Amidst all the busyness of getting ready for nativity plays and carol services, the fun of decorating trees, wrapping gifts, and plenty of pre-Christmas celebrating, Advent is a time to pause, reflect and get ready to welcome Jesus into our hearts.

In school, the children have been learning about the real importance and significance of Advent.

Advent is a time of preparing for two things: to **welcome Jesus at Christmas**, and to **be ready for His return**.

Therefore, it is important for us all to make space in our busy lives to put Jesus at the centre this Advent and Christmastide.

The children have been preparing to welcome Jesus in their hearts.

"Prepare for the way for the Lord!"

Mark 1: 1 - 8



The assemblies during December focussed on reflecting about Advent as a time for us to prepare the way for Jesus.

We discussed different ways we can get ready for His arrival on Christmas Day.

Children learned that the Advent Wreath itself holds special messages that help us to get to know more about God as well as being a focus for our Christmas preparations.

- **The circle** – reminds us that God has no beginning and no end
- **Evergreen leaves** – remind us that like the year-round green leaves of a Christmas Tree, God never changes
- **Five candles** – provide a countdown for the four weeks of Advent and the celebration of Christmas Day
- **Purple** – the liturgical colour representing prayer, penance, good works and sacrifice
- **Rose** (for the 3rd Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday) – the liturgical colour of joy
- **White** (for Christmas Day) – the liturgical colour of purity to represent the life of Christ



Mass: Celebrating Advent

Children participated in Mass in school today to celebrate Advent as a time of preparation for us as we await the special birth of Baby Jesus on Christmas Day.

We would like to thank Fr. Peter for leading the celebration of Mass.

The Mass was organised and led by Y5.

Thank you to Mr. Askin and all of Y5 who took part in the celebration of Mass.

In the homily, Fr. Peter asked us to describe what Jesus was like.

The children responded, 'kind', 'helpful' and 'loving'.

Fr. Peter highlighted the importance of showing love to all people at all times.

He explained that this was sometimes it was difficult but it was important to try.

Fr. Peter emphasized that Jesus is our role model and we should try to make the same choices as He did especially over the Christmas period.



School **St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary**

"Love one another as I have loved you"
Pupil Chaplains



Pupil Chaplains have chosen 'The Catholic Children's Society (CCS)' as their Advent charity this year. This charity supports disadvantaged children and families across London, Hertfordshire and the South East.

CSS work with individuals of all faiths and none. There are many families in our local community who are in need at this time of year.

Parents and carers were invited to make a donation to the CSS after each of our Advent concerts: Reception singing carols around the tree, Key stage 1 Nativity and Key Stage 2 Advent Service.

Our collections for the Catholic Children's Society after all of our Advent performances have raised an amazing £1,084.80. This money will go directly to families in crisis within the London area.

Thank you so much for your generosity.



In assembly the Pupil chaplains launched 'St Elizabeth's Advent Challenge' as part of the school's Advent preparations.

Children were encouraged to think and carry out acts of kindness each day during Advent at home and at school; For example, playing with someone new, giving a compliment, praying for those in need, undertaking a job at home without being asked etc..

Children were encouraged to annotate the acts of kindness on their own Advent Calendar or the class Advent Calendar.

The Pupil Chaplains emphasized that by carrying out acts of kindness they were continuing Jesus' message of love.



One of the Pupil Chaplains' targets is to encourage St. Elizabeth's Community to pray more. Pupil Chaplains have created Christmas Prayer Packets to help families to pray more at home. Each class was given a children's version of 'The Story of the First Christmas' which came home with a different child each night. The child who took the book home was like the 'innkeeper' for the evening.

Families read about Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem in preparation for the birth of Jesus, travelling on their journey looking for somewhere to stay for the night.

Families were asked to reflect upon how they can be more like the inn-keeper and say yes to people in need during Advent



Pope Francis 'Intention of the Month'

The Pope asks for our prayers for a specific intention each month. We are invited to answer the Pope's request and to join with many people worldwide in praying for this intention each month.

Pope Francis' prayer request for December is focussed on inclusion.

Pope Francis highlights the importance of an inclusive society where each person has the opportunity to participate.

Reflection:

How can we be more inclusive at home, in school and in the wider community?

Parent Prayer Club



We would like to invite parents to attend a prayer club each Thursday in school. The prayer club will take place each at 2:45 pm in the 'Environmental room'. Mrs Diver will be present and this will be an opportunity for parents to pray together and talk their faith.

We look forward to praying with parents in the new year.

The first prayer club will take place on Thursday 11th January 2024

Family Christmas Reflection



Family Christmas Reflection

The real focus of Christmas is to reflect on the great joy of Jesus birth for each of us personally.

Please read this reflection together as a family. You are going to be invited to join the scene at the first Christmas

Holy Spirit, we invite you and welcome you here. Help us to know what a great gift Jesus is to everyone.

Imagine that you are on a dusty path in the middle of Bethlehem. It is a bit chilly as it's night-time. Look up into the sky – you can see millions of stars. More than you've ever seen before. Around you, you can hear laughter, singing and noise – the town is full of families and friends meeting for the census. It's crowded everywhere!

You notice one star in particular though – it seems brighter than the others. It looks as though it's hovering just above a small building you can see up ahead. Something about the brightness of the star makes you follow its light to the building.

Up close, you see the building is almost like a cave – a small, dark space. The star is definitely above it. You peer into the darkness and your eyes start to get used to the dark. At the back of the cave, you can see a mum, dad and can hear the cries of a tiny baby. It's so different from the noise and busyness on the Bethlehem streets.

You hear the mum's voice - she's saying, "Come in – you're so welcome. Come and see my new son - he's perfect." You walk quietly to where the mum and baby are sitting – they're on the hay and you can see animals sleeping nearby. You keep very quiet as you can see the baby is asleep. There is an amazing feeling of peace as you kneel down to get a closer look at the baby. He has the sweetest little fingers, and you realise as you look that you have a huge smile on your face. You can't help yourself at the sight of this baby!

The mum introduces herself – she tells you her name is Mary and that her husband's name is Joseph. She tells you that the baby is called Jesus and that He is God's son. You quietly whisper His name 'Jesus' and just saying the name brings you more feelings of peace and now a sense of joy too. You aren't sure what it means that He is God's son, but you sense that it's one of the most important things you will ever hear.

Mary says that you are welcome to hold the baby and give Him a cuddle. You can hardly believe it because He is so incredibly tiny and has just been born! But Mary has a look of trust on her face. She tells you that she wants to share her baby with you – that she doesn't own Him, that He is a gift. Mary says that Jesus is a gift not just for her, but for everyone.

She gently gathers up the material He is wrapped in. You sit on the hay - it's soft and warm – and you get your arms ready to receive Jesus. Mary puts Him gently into your arms. You may have held a baby before, or it may be the first time but imagine holding Jesus now – He lies very still and doesn't cry. He feels so light in your arms and as you look down at His face, all you can think about is how special

YOU feel to be holding Him. You've been trusted with Jesus, God's son! As you hold Him and make sure He's wrapped up and warm and safely held in your arms, you again experience this incredible feeling of peace and joy. You feel as though you can do anything – there is nothing to be frightened of when you are gazing at Jesus' face.

You realise that the time is passing quickly and you need to go and find where you are staying for the night with your family. Gently, you hand Jesus back to Mary and thank her for the opportunity to be close to Jesus. Joseph is looking on proudly at Mary and Jesus and thanks you for visiting. Joseph and Mary tell you that you're welcome to visit any time. Mary says again that Jesus isn't just hers and Joseph's – that He is for everyone. She says He is a gift for you too and for everyone in the whole world in the whole of history!

This news makes you feel so joyful and as you get up from the hay to find your family, you think about how you can't wait to tell them the amazing news about how you have been close to God's son! You accept Mary and Joseph's invitation to visit any time you want and say thank you again and goodbye.

Holy Spirit, help us to know that Jesus' birth brings us great joy!

Let us pray...



Loving Father,
Jesus is the greatest gift we have been given.
How we live our life is our gift back to Him.
Please guide me to make the right choices in what I say and do.
Amen



As this term draws to a close, it is with real pride that we look back upon all that the School has been able to achieve.

Gratitude goes to St. Elizabeth's staff for their unwavering dedication and commitment to providing the very best for our pupils,

The Advent Service and Infant Nativity were fantastic where the true meaning of Christmas was delivered.

The staff of St Elizabeth's wish you a happy and Holy Christmas.
We look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

From Mrs Diver, RE and Catholic Life Lead