

St Martin of Tours

Epsom

St Stephen on the Downs

Langley Vale

The parish of
St Martin of Tours
with St Stephen-on-the-Downs

Weekly Newsletter
Registered Charity Number: 1134149

Sunday 19th December 2021 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Dear Friends,

Today we light the pink candle to remember the role of Mary in the Advent story. A simple young woman, pregnant, putting her faith in the call of God, supported by her betrothed, making a long journey to his ancestral home to meet the demands of the state. It sounds like something from one of those TV appeals, or a harrowing piece on the international news. But it was all to make straight the path of the coming Saviour.

Nick Parish

THIS WEEK

Sunday 19th December – Fourth Sunday of Advent

- 9.30am – Morning Praise at St Stephen's – led by Howard Bluett
- 10.00am – Holy Communion at St Martin's, in Church and live streamed – led by Nick Parish
- 6.30pm – Nine Lessons and Carols at St Martin's, in Church and live streamed – led by Nick Parish

Wednesday 22nd December

- 10.00am – Holy Communion – led by Nick Parish

FUTURE SERVICES

Friday 24th December – Christmas Eve

- 4.00pm – Family Service at St Martin's, **live streamed only** – led by Sarah Lutton
- 5.00pm – Holy Communion at St Martin's, in Church led by Nick Parish

Saturday 25th December – Christmas Day

- 8.30am – Holy Communion at St Martin's – led by Nick Parish
- 10.00am – Holy Communion at St Martin's, in Church and live streamed – led by Andrew Havilland

Sunday 26th December – Fourth Sunday of Advent

- 10.00am – Holy Communion at St Stephen's – led by Nick Parish
- 10.00am – NO SERVICE at St Martin's**
- 6.30pm – NO SERVICE at St Martin's**

Wednesday 29th December NO SERVICE

Giving at the Family Service

This year we are supporting The Children's Society at our **ONLINE** Family Service on the 24th December. To make a donation either:

1. Click on the following link:

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/19118>

OR

2. Use your Smart Phone and Scan the QR Code below



Please note that due to the COVID situation, to mitigate risk, the Christmas Eve 4pm Family Service will be livestreamed only. The 5pm said communion will go ahead in Church but will NOT be livestreamed.

STEWARDSHIP

Giving to St Martin's and St Stephen on the Downs

For general and stewardship giving you can give online giving via the Charities Aid Foundation. Donations can be either a one-off donation or a regular donation using direct debit. To make a donation either:

1. Click on the following link:

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/13377>

OR

2. Use your Smart Phone and Scan the QR Code below



There is also a "Donate" button on our website.

Cheques to St Martin's

If give a cheque donation to St Martin's Church, please can it payable to: 'The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Epsom'

Donation Station

If you wish to give via contactless payment, please us the donation station in Church. You can give a pre-set amount or choose one. You can also gift aid your donation.

OTHER NOTICES

Tuesdays in Church

I shall *not* be available on 28th December and 4th January, but will be back in Church as usual on Tuesday 11th January, 9.00 – 12.00 am. ***Mary Gilbert***

Beacon Lunch

A festive lunch will be held on Wednesday 29th December in Church House at 12.00pm for 12.30pm. All are welcome. If you think you are likely to join us it would be helpful if you would sign the list at the back of the Church TODAY to help us to cater effectively.

Christmas Cactus!

John Norrington has kindly donated some Christmas Cactus he has grown and they are at the back of church this Sunday morning. If you would like one, please take one and put a donation to church funds in the basket. Thank you, John!

Parish Administrator

Gina, who has held this post for over seven years, is moving on to a new job in the new year. Her last working day will be December 23rd. I'm sure everyone will join me in expressing our thanks for her hard work for us and wishing her well in her new role. If you would like to contribute to a gift, then please do so by the end of Sunday 19th in Church. You can use the envelope provided or give to a warden or myself.

Nick Parish

12 Days - Movement for good

'Could you spare 5 minutes for 12 days to help St Martins?

Ecclesiastical Insurance are donating £1,000 to 10 charities for 12 days from 6th to 21st December.

Just click on [12 Days - Movement for good – Nominate a charity to receive £1000 from Ecclesiastical](#) and complete the simple form starting with our Charity No: 1134149.

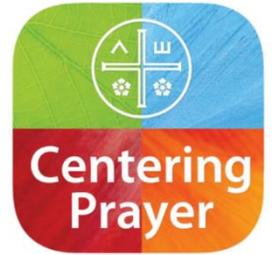
Everyone who enters, each day from 5th, will increase St Martin's opportunity to receive £1,000. Thank you!

Vacancies in Church life

We are currently praying for a new Treasurer to join our leadership team. John Flower also reaches the end of his term of office as a churchwarden in May, and I urge everyone to pray about this, and if anyone feels either of these vital roles in Church life might be for them, do please speak to myself, or the wardens. ***Nick Parish***

CENTERING PRAYER FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS - STARTING JANUARY 18th

The Centering Prayer Taster Day was an introduction to the work of Fr Thomas Keating and an experience of the inner prayer method he began. The Taster Day has led to six follow-up sessions in which to establish the practice of Centering Prayer on an individual basis. In essence, Centering Prayer follows Jesus's direction to "Go to your room,,,,,,,"



The six follow-up one hour sessions will be held at St Martin's weekly on Tuesdays, beginning on January 18th and then January 25th, February 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd. Lynne Scholefield has agreed to present both an afternoon session (at 4pm to 5pm) and an evening session (7.30pm to 8.30pm) on each day. Even if you missed the Taster Day, anyone can attend these Centering Prayer learner sessions. It will be good to know how many we shall be, so please speak with Lynne Scholefield or Judith Mitchell or email stmcenteringprayer@gmail.com to make a booking.

MISSION FOR THE MONTH

HOME MISSION

The Church Army - Activating positive change through faith, words and action. A mission focused community within the Anglican Church, positively affecting lives prayerfully. They are expectant, risk taking and generous

The Children's Society - is a national society that seeks to help thousands of children who desperately need support and practical help. They also campaign to change laws.

Jill Chapman

ABROAD MISSION

Founded in December 2006 by Ruthie Marcus, in memory of her only child Alex, AMECA is committed to healthcare delivery, training healthcare professionals and to healthcare education in sub-Saharan African countries, through sustainable initiatives. AMECA is a small but growing charitable trust.

In Malawi the last project to be completed is the building of a maternity unit and training personnel to administer healthcare.

Meg Topley

CHURCH RECORDING THAT COMMENCED IN NOVEMBER 2021

The Epsom Church Recording Society is preparing a Church Record of St Martin's. Volunteer members (mainly from the Arts Society Epsom) will be visiting the Church one or two mornings a month to prepare a detailed account of everything present inside the Church. Following a format prescribed by the Church Recording Society, the aim is that over a period of two to three years a comprehensive record is produced of the furnishings, artefacts, and some of the fabric of the Church that not only captures its heritage but also enables its future preservation and protection. On completion, a copy of the Church Record will be presented to St Martin's and copies deposited in the County Record Office, Woking, Church Care, the Church Recording Society and the V&A Art Library.

We wish the volunteer team well in their endeavours and look forward to following their progress over the coming months.

For further information see www.churchrecordingsociety.org.uk.

Latest message from Food Bank

We are so grateful to all of our wonderful supporters; every donation makes a difference! This week we need:

- Toilet rolls
- UHT milk (full fat and semi skimmed only please)
- Longlife fruit juice
- Gravy granules / stock cubes / stock pots
- Longlife sponge puddings
- Tea bags • Instant mash • Custard
- Household cleaning products
- Adult toothpaste • Hair conditioner
- Sanitary pads
- Dried pasta and sauce • Packet soup
- Nappies and pull ups 4+ & 6+
- Bags for Life



You can donate at the usual supermarket points, or bring donations to our car park (please wear a mask);

Epsom & Ewell Foodbank Generation Resource Centre
(Behind West Ewell Primary School)
Ruxley Lane Ewell, KT19 0JG

Normal donation drop off times: Monday to Friday 9am – 2pm.

We are closed on Bank Holidays.

* Please make sure all donations are sealed, in date and do not contain alcohol*

CONTACT US

Parish Office:

**Church House, Church Street, Epsom,
KT17 4PX Phone: 01372 722567**

E-mail: stmartinsepsom@btconnect.com

Website: www.stmartinsepsom.org

**Opening hours are Mondays, Wednesday, Thursdays & Fridays
9.30am to 12.30pm**

The Revd Nick Parish – Vicar – 01372 743336

Email: vicar@stmartinsepsom.org

The Revd Canon Adrian Esdaile - Priest in Retirement - 01372 723770

Email: esdaileadrian@yahoo.co.uk

***(available for Contemplative Prayer, Counsel,
Spiritual Direction and the Healing Ministry)***

COLLECT

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his
coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him
when he comes again as our judge;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

FIRST READING Micah 5:2-5a

A reading from the book of the prophet Micah.

The LORD says to his people: But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

CANTICLE OR PSALM

Either **Luke 1:46b-55**

R *My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.*

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
For he has looked with favour on his lowly servant,
from this day all generations will call me blessed.
The Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name. **R**

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm;
he has scattered the proud in their conceit. **R**

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones
and he has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty. **R**

He has come to the help of his servant, Israel,
for he has remembered his promise of mercy.

The promise he made to our forebears;
to Abraham and his children for ever. **R**

Or Psalm 80:1-7

R *Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance and we shall be saved.*

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us. **R**

O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angered despite the prayers of your people?
You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
You have made us the derision of our neighbours,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn. **R**

SECOND READING

Hebrews 10:5-10

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book, it is written of me)." When Christ said, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sin-offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that

we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

GOSPEL Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." [And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever."]

POST COMMUNION

Heavenly Father,
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour:
fill us your servants with your grace,
that in all things we may embrace your holy will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday Homily

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

19 DECEMBER 2021

YEAR C

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting,
the child leapt in her womb.”

Luke 1:41

Illustration

Greetings are an important part of our life. Every time we meet someone it involves some form of greeting. It may be a handshake, a smile, a wave, a cheery “Hi” or something more formal.

During the past few days or weeks most of us will have been choosing the special greeting which is to accompany each Christmas card we send. In some there will be just a simple line and in others a whole letter detailing the events of our past year. Our greeting depends upon the level of intimacy that we share with the recipient. We save our jokes for people who speak the same kind of language and our formality for those we either do not know so well or who are partially screened from us by status or great age. With friends and those who share our circumstances we can be completely open and free.

But this freedom may be realised in a simple word or phrase. Our language becomes almost a code expressing the secrets we share, full of mysteries which others would not understand or regard as relevant, as they do not know the history or belief which underpins the words. Every communication is important but some have a depth of meaning which speak of the foundations upon which the relationship is built and, therefore, are a mystery to an outsider.

Gospel Teaching

The first chapter of Luke’s Gospel is full of greetings. Mary is granted the angel Gabriel’s “Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.” Zechariah is told: “Do not be afraid... your prayer has been heard.” Zechariah is told the mystery of his future son’s life in God and his responsibility towards the Messiah. Mary is told the secret of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, which no one else knows, as proof of the angel’s mission to confirm her own destiny. When she arrived at Elizabeth’s door only Elizabeth would have known why her young relation had come. Mary must have known what others did not.

Elizabeth’s reaction was immediate and spontaneous. Her own child leaped within her as John recognised the presence of the Lord, whose coming he would foretell. As the Holy Spirit filled Mary at her conception, so it filled Elizabeth, who became a living Pentecost long before Christ’s mission was complete. The women shared

their blessedness. They were women who shared a mystery. Their sons would change the world, they were utterly united in faith, anxiety, anticipation, trust and hope. Their acknowledgement of the great things which were happening to them would have been in their every touch and sigh, every look and most of all in their awareness of their shared maternity, the children within them, and their determination to bring God's will to fruition. Little wonder that Elizabeth exclaimed her joy at the way in which God shares his goodness with those who wait on him in trust and hope.

Application

Cultures which have developed out of religious beliefs often include blessing in their greetings and farewells. "God be with you" has been reduced to "goodbye" and we rarely consider its real meaning when we use it. However our relationships proceed, we always know when a greeting is not well-meant. Mary and Elizabeth recognised each other's worth in their exchanges, they were life-affirming for each other, each acknowledging the other's holiness. Their greetings said much more than "hello".

Perhaps we, too, could try to do the same with those we meet, especially at this special time of exchanging gifts and greetings. This is a good time for renewing true depth and real life-giving in our relationships. There may be people we have forgotten this year who would be warmed by our special remembrance.

Broken relationships we could consider mending, not necessarily by complicated explanations, but by a simple word, a recognition of their value. We might consider ways of exchanging greetings which catch some of Elizabeth's exuberance and blessing. In turn we may find ourselves receiving more than we expected this Christmas. Blessing and joy in the greetings given to us. A greater warmth, a deeper reality in our relationships. Friendships which better mirror the love which God has for us. The affirmation which is part of the gift which the Christ-child brings us in his coming. Reassurance that we are loved and valued so much that God would want to share our lives with us.

MON 20 DECEMBER

Isaiah 7:10-14
 Psalm 24:1-6
 Luke 1:26-38

TUES 21 DECEMBER

Zephaniah 3:14-18
 Psalm 33:1-4, 11-12.
 20-end
 Luke 1:39-45

WED 22 DECEMBER

1 Samuel 1:24-end
 Psalm 113
 Luke 1:46-56

THURS 23 DECEMBER

Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-end
 Psalm 25:3-9
 Luke 1:57-66

FRI 24 DECEMBER

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16
 Psalm 89:2, 19-27
 Acts 13:16-26
 Luke 1:67-79

SAT 25 DECEMBER**Christmas Day****Set I**

Isaiah 9:2-7
 Psalm 96
 Titus 2:11-14
 Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

Set II

Isaiah 62:6-end
 Psalm 97
 Titus 3:4-7
 Luke 2:[1-7] 8-20

Set III

Isaiah 52:7-10
 Psalm 98
 Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]
 John 1:1-14

REFLECTION

Luke's Gospel takes us through the final few days of waiting for Christ's coming. While our Old Testament

readings continue to proclaim the distant hope of a saviour, a messenger, a new King David, Luke tells a more intimate story. Two women are unexpectedly pregnant; one too old, one young and unmarried. Their stories are interwoven. One of the children will be the messenger, the other the Saviour.

Inserted into the account of the visits, the first birth and the naming ceremony, are two glorious songs which in the Anglican liturgy have become the canticles Magnificat and Benedictus.

The words of the Benedictus are the first that Zechariah utters when the Holy Spirit moves him to speak, having been silenced because of his unbelief: "By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Both canticles proclaim a God fiercely active in the world, overturning injustice, caring for those who are poor, honouring the covenant with faithful people, keeping promises. The wait has been long, but now is the moment when this God's plan of salvation comes into effect.

PRAYER

Eternal God,
 as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,
 so we wait for his coming in glory.
 Bring us through the birth pangs of
 this present age,
 to see, with her, our great salvation in
 Jesus Christ, our Lord.



PART IV – ADVENT AROUND THE WORLD

All over the world Advent is celebrated in a variety of ways. Some traditions have been going for generations, while others have fallen out of use.

In nineteenth-century England there was a practice of carrying around a “vessel cup” – a glass-lidded box containing two dolls representing the Virgin Mary and Jesus, decorated with ribbons and surrounded by flowers and fruit. It was taken door to door by a woman who would sing a carol and expect a small payment in return. It was considered bad luck for any household not to be visited by the doll-bearers with their “Advent images” before Christmas Eve.

In northern France in Advent, farmers used to employ children to run through the fields and orchards with fire torches, igniting bundles of straw and driving out vermin.

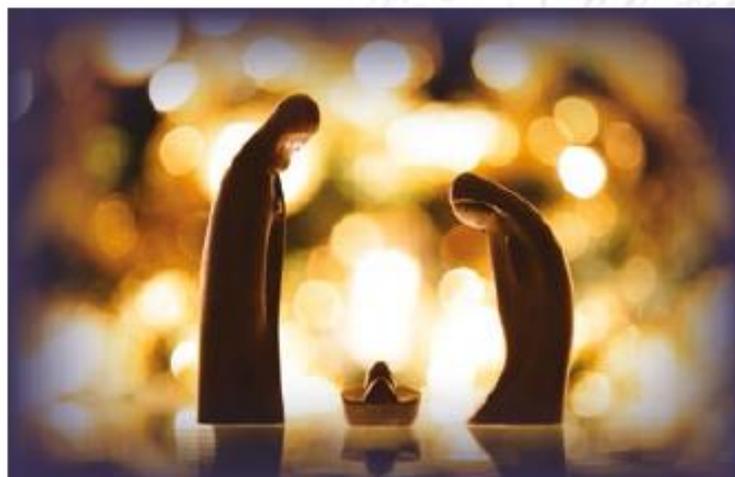
In Italy, the *pifferari* – or pipers – still come down from the mountains of Calabria and the Abruzzi into Rome and assemble before the shrines of Mary to play their zampogna. Italian tradition has it that the shepherds played these bagpipes at the Bethlehem manger – and they are often shown carrying pipes in paintings. But the *pifferari* were not always welcome. The nineteenth-century writer Stendhal complained that they “have been waking us up at four in the morning. It’s enough to make a man hate music!”

German Lutherans are thought to have introduced the Advent calendar. As early calendars were made of wood and designed to last years, Advent calendars generally reckon the season to start on 1 December. Another popular way of marking the countdown to Christmas is the Advent wreath, in which a candle is lighted on each of the four Sundays. As well as the three purple candles and the rose candle, a fifth white or gold candle – called a “Christ Candle” – is often lit in the centre on Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day to signify Christ’s birth. The circular shape and evergreen foliage of the wreath, which often forms the base for the candles, represent eternity.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
Caroline Hodgson
and
Heather Smith

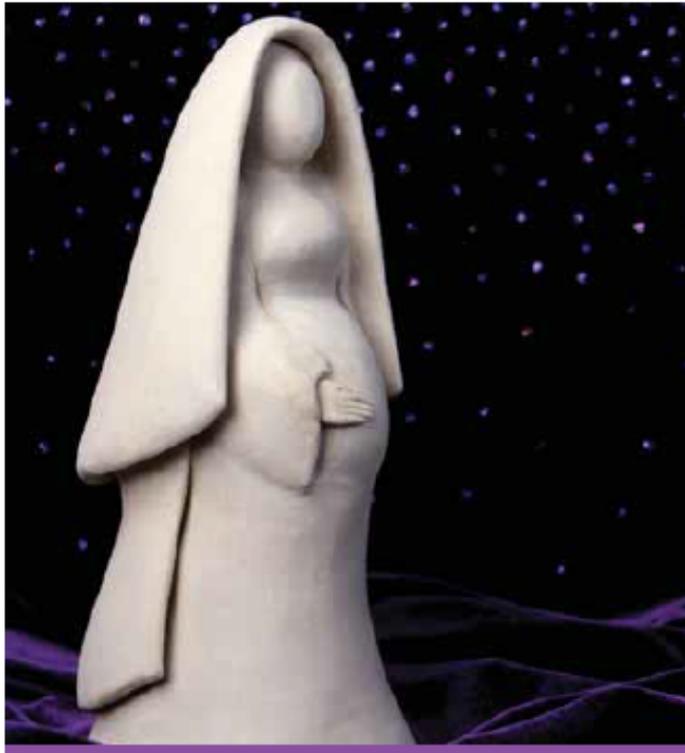


Christmas

Monday 20 December to
Saturday 25 December
2021

WEEK

Mothers and sons



Katharine Smith *reflects on* Luke 1:39-45

Our Gospel reading today is a beautiful story in which many other stories are woven together against the backdrop of the great story of God's people Israel. There's the story of Elizabeth, about to bear a child despite her age and earlier inability to conceive; the story of the youthful Mary, whose unborn child is also unexpected and unplanned by his mother. Then there are the stories of John, born to be the messenger who prepares the Lord's way, and of Jesus, whose coming has long been foretold. Just out of sight are Zechariah and Joseph, men and fathers who fade into the background as their sons follow their own destiny.

Central today, though, are the two mothers – women who have

such different experiences of bearing sons, but who both know that those sons are destined in some way to fulfil God's purposes. We don't know if Elizabeth lived to hear John's voice crying out in the wilderness or to suffer the terrible loss of her son, murdered on Herod's orders. We do know that Mary would live to see Jesus dying on the cross, to feel the sword pierce her heart, but then again to know the joy of his new resurrection life.

Today is only about the joy, the excitement and the awe of two women whose children, it seems, already know one another and whose faith led them to say "yes" to God.

All generations will call them both blessed. 🙏

Heavenly Father, as Mary and Elizabeth share their joy in the fulfilment of your promises to them, help us to look forward to the fulfilment of your promises to us, as once again we prepare to greet the birth of your Son into our lives this Christmas. Amen.

Keeping Christ in Christmas

Part 7 – Christmas tree

by Heather Cooke

If you have an artificial Christmas tree, you may have decorated it some time ago. If you prefer a natural one, you may be collecting it this week.

Many people prefer an artificial tree to one that drops needles all over the carpet, while others wouldn't be without the special smell of a real Christmas tree, part of God's creation.

Whatever our preference, when we look at our tree this week, we can keep the Christ in Christmas by thinking of a very special Christmas tree... the family tree of Jesus. Both Luke and Matthew tell us of generations of his family, like baubles and lights on the tree, reminding us vividly that Jesus was both human and divine, born of Mary, yet Son of God.

"Joy, joy, for Christ is born; the babe, the son of Mary". 🙏

“Christmas is fast approaching. And now that Christ has aroused our seasonal expectations, he'll soon fulfil them all!”

St Augustine (AD 354-430), theologian, philosopher and bishop

International Human Solidarity Day

by Caroline Hodgson

Tomorrow is designated International Human Solidarity Day by the United Nations. Solidarity is identified in the UN's Millennium Declaration as one of the fundamental values of international relations in the twenty-first century, "wherein those, who either suffer or benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most".

With this in mind, the day exists: to celebrate our unity in diversity; to remind governments to respect their commitments to international agreements; to raise public awareness of the importance of solidarity; to encourage debate on the ways to promote solidarity for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty eradication; and as a day of action to encourage new initiatives for poverty eradication.

The UN sees the concept of solidarity as "crucial in the fight against poverty". So why not make solidarity the focus of your prayer this week?

www.un.org/en/observances/human-solidarity-day 🙏

LOOK

Sunday 19 December 2021
 Luke 1:39-45
 4th Sunday of Advent

In the GOSPEL TODAY

Jump for Joy

Arthur is really happy and is jumping for joy! What makes you really happy? Draw yourself jumping for joy next to Arthur.



Mary rushes to meet her cousin, Elizabeth. They are both expecting babies and are really happy to see each other.

Mary and Elizabeth

Here is a picture of Mary meeting Elizabeth. They are really excited and pleased to see each other. Put a big smile on their faces to show how happy they are.



Elizabeth knew that Mary's baby was very special. Even the baby in Elizabeth's womb knew the baby Jesus was very special. He jumped for joy!

Hail Mary

Elizabeth's words to Mary have become part of a special prayer. We know this prayer as the Hail Mary. Can you fill in the missing words?



Hail, full of, the Lord is with thee.
 art thou among women and blessed is the of thy
 womb, Holy Mary, of God, for us
 sinners now and at the hour of our death.

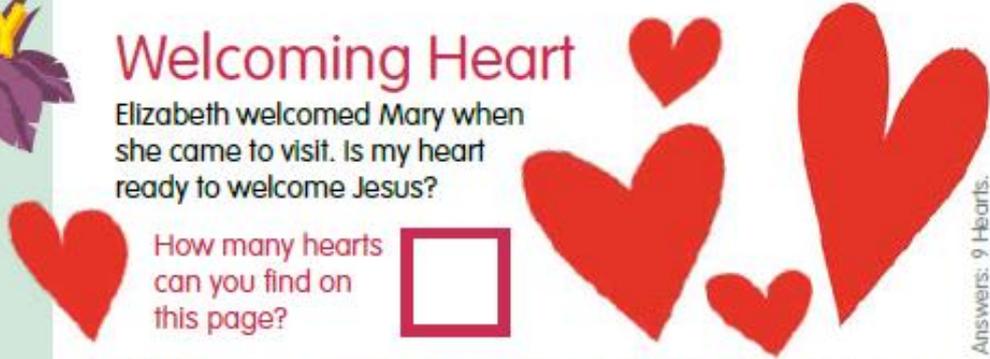
I want to jump for joy when...

A PRAYER TO SAY

Mary, you are very special. You said "yes" to God and showed us how to love. Help me to say "yes" to God so that I can bring love into the world and spread joy too! Amen.

Welcoming Heart

Elizabeth welcomed Mary when she came to visit. Is my heart ready to welcome Jesus?



How many hearts can you find on this page?