



St. Columba's, Culloden

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~ PARISH NEWSLETTER ~

11TH DECEMBER 2016 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR A

Sunday Mass Readings

1st Reading: Isaiah 35: 1-6, 10

Psalm: Ps 145 (146): 6-10

2nd Reading: James 5: 7-10

Gospel: Matthew 11: 2-11

| Date | Details | Service | Time |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Sunday 11 December | THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT | Sacrament of Reconciliation Mass | 9.00am 9.30am |
| Tuesday 13 December | Memorial of St Lucy | ** Evening Prayer ** Mass | 7.00pm 7.30pm |
| Wednesday 14 December | Memorial of St John of the Cross | Mass Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament | 11.00am 11.30am |
| Thursday 15 December | Thursday of the Third Week of Advent | Mass | 7.30pm |
| Sunday 18 December | FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT | Sacrament of Reconciliation Mass | 9.00am 9.30am |

The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available 30 minutes before EVERY Mass during Advent and Christmas.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR A) – “REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS”

Rejoice! This is the instruction we are given at the beginning of Mass today. We are well and truly into the Advent mood now and this instruction comes to put our Advent preparations into context. But what do we have to rejoice about? The Gospel presents us with the rather odd figure of John the Baptist. The Lord proclaims that no greater man than he has been born. It's clear that John the Baptist has much to rejoice about. What entitles him to this great honour?

John the Baptist was on the edge. His diet and his dress sense were weird, his living environment less than desirable. These things matter little to John. He was quite clear about his mission, and that was his sole focus. He was tasked with preparing the hearts of the people to receive the great joy of the Messiah. He preached to them a clear message of repentance, that they must turn away from sin so that they can recognise him when he comes. He gave them a baptism of repentance, a symbol of their liberation from the slavery of sin, which made them ready to greet their Redeemer. People flocked to him to listen and to be baptised. He fulfilled his task with great zeal and passion. In today's gospel, he is making contact with the Lord from prison, for he has heard the Lord's actions. The authorities have locked him away, for the message he preaches terrifies them. Yet John is someone who cannot be imprisoned because it is impossible. Yes, you can lock him up. But you cannot imprison someone who has truly repented with a full heart. Even though John cannot see the Lord face to face, he is able to recognise him through the thick walls of a prison. The words conveyed to him by the Lord most certainly would make John rejoice.

Repentance is a huge problem for us because it demands we examine every aspect of our lives. There are lots of areas where we are simply not ready for repenting. It's painful for us to break free from patterns of sin that seem to give us

comfort and make us happy. We think we will miss them and suffer without them. There are lots of things in our lives that we don't want to admit are sinful, and sometimes when we look at the extent of our sinfulness we can become disheartened, and think that repentance is pointless. It is, however, necessary if we desire to receive our Saviour.

Reflecting on all these things over the last few weeks of Advent, we might be getting a little bogged down in it all. That's why the Church tells us to rejoice. There's no doubt that the gospel is demanding, but we have the great joy of God's grace and the fellowship of each other spurring us on to true repentance. We have the great comfort of God's mercy, which means we don't need to languish in slavery to sin. We're right on the threshold of our complete happiness. We're on the very edge of true joy. This Sunday reminds us that, like John the Baptist, we're on the edge. We need to edge our way closer to true repentance because that's where we find our joy. Our salvation is a work in progress. Let's continue through Advent to encourage each other in prayer both to repent and rejoice. (Fr David Edward Rocks, OP)

WHAT IS 'GAUDETE SUNDAY'?

Certain Sundays throughout the liturgical year have taken their names from the first word in Latin of the Introit, the entrance antiphon at Mass. Gaudete Sunday (the Third Sunday of Advent) is one of these. The Introit is taken from Philippians 4: 4-5: "*Gaudete in Domino semper*" ("Rejoice in the Lord always"). Advent is a penitential season, so the priest normally wears purple vestments; on Gaudete Sunday, having passed the midpoint of Advent, the Church lightens the mood a little, and the priest may wear rose vestments. The change in colour provides us with encouragement to continue our spiritual preparation for Christmas. For this same reason, the third candle of the Advent wreath, first lit on Gaudete Sunday, is traditionally rose-coloured.

GENERAL NEWS

PENITENTIAL SERVICE St Mary's, Beaulieu: Saturday, 17 December, led by Fr Domenico. Here is the programme:

10.30 am – Welcome, and Advent Penitential Reflection;
11.00 am – Opportunities for the Sacrament of Confession; worship music played by Marie-Claire, Sarah and Mark;
12.30 pm – Holy Mass/Homily by Fr Domenico;
1.00 pm – light lunch. Come and prepare yourself spiritually for the birth of Our Saviour this Christmas! All welcome!

PARISH NEWS

CHRISTMAS CLEAN: Monday 12 December, at 6.30pm. All hands on deck! – **All teams to come together** to clean the church, and make it ready for Christmas. “Thank you” for your help throughout the year!

THIS WEDNESDAY: CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

– **Wed 14 December, 7.00pm - 8.00pm.** Back by popular demand – a date for your diaries! As per last year, we will be hosting a service of your favourite Christmas carols, with community singing (that means you!) together with seasonal Scripture readings, here at St Columba's, with festive food and drink provided (mulled wine, mince pies, and other goodies). We have also invited a few special guests to join us!! Donations at the door – all proceeds go towards our Building Fund. Why not invite some friends? Spread a little festive cheer!

Speaking of which, **can you help us on the night?** We need volunteers to help with: moving the chairs and setting up tables; serving food and drink; hospitality at the door; reading during the carol service; tidying away afterwards. Please sign up on the sheet in the foyer.

CHRISTMAS ON THE AVENUE: Sunday 18 December from 2.00pm until 3.00pm. Carol singing organised by Smithton/Culloden Community Group. Open to everyone willing to sing a few Carols or play an instrument. No charge; just go along. Hot drinks, festive foods, fresh popcorn.. and maybe even Santa! Come along!

First Holy Communion classes will start on **Thursday 12 January at 5.30pm.** Families are invited to attend the first session, which will last for 30 minutes. **If any children are yet to register, please collect a form from the Sacristy and return it as soon as possible.**

Blythwood Trust Shoe Box Appeal – Update: thanks to everyone's efforts, Ainsley was able to make up **27 boxes**, to give to the Blythwood Trust. Thank you – your generosity is very much appreciated!

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is available at St Columba's before EVERY Mass in this Advent Season, in the Lady Chapel. Just come along and see Fr Domenico, or ask at any time. Remember the words of Pope Francis: “Even if the Holy Door closes, the true door of mercy, which is the heart of Christ, always remains open wide for us”. Deo gratias!

NEW: Evening Prayer: 7.00pm every Tuesday. Why not join us as we pray together the Universal Prayer of the Church? An ideal preparation for Mass, and for Christmas!

Snow/ice clearing: our list of volunteers needs updating. Can you help? Please sign up in the foyer.

Faith in Film Evening: *The Nativity Story* (2006), Wednesday 21 December, at 7.00pm. Critics have described this adaptation as “beautifully directed and portrayed” – “a truly wonderful film that conveys great spiritual power, even as it brings home the humanity of Mary and Joseph to a degree few of its predecessors ever even attempted. Keisha Castle-Hughes is wonderful as young Mary, but [...] Oscar Isaac is more than up to the task of bringing this humble carpenter to vivid life” (**Certificate: PG – 97 minutes**).

HOME ALONE THIS CHRISTMAS? If you're spending Christmas by yourself this year, why not join some of our other parishioners for a Christmas meal together? If you would like to do this, please speak to Fr Domenico, or to Magda Maclean.

GRAND CHRISTMAS RAFFLE: Take a few books home for friends and neighbours! **Only £1 a ticket** – available in the entrance foyer.

FANCY A CHRISTMAS HAMPER?!! You'd be a turkey not to! Only £1 a ticket, available in the foyer, for our fabulous festive hamper – drawn on Christmas Day! Don't miss out!

ST COLUMBA'S HOGMANAY DANCE, from 9.00pm until 12.30am. Come along to St Columba's on Hogmanay and bring in the New Year with us in style! Tickets are priced **just £5.00, in aid of the Church Building Fund.** Music is provided by John Gordon, and there will be stovies & oatcakes and other delights all night long! Please feel free to bring your own refreshments! Tickets are now on sale – why not treat yourself and your family this Hogmanay?!!

“90 Club” December draw: NEXT WEEK. Good luck to all who have a number. We still have a few available; please ask Don about joining in – **ONLY £2 MONTHLY!**

PRIZE BINGO – 27 January is the date of our next ‘eyes down’ – thereafter every last Friday until June. Your help in donating items to give as prizes is always greatly appreciated. Thank you very much.

A FANTASTIC AMOUNT!.. nearly £4,500 has been raised for the Parish Building Fund over the course of this year, as a result of our monthly Fundraiser Bingo and our “90 Club”. Thank you for your support, and a very special ‘thank you’ to the tremendous team who organise and run these important fundraisers.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Sick: Anna Black + Audrey O'Connell + Amelia Drew + Leslie Murray + Jane Green + Frances Boyle

Recently Departed: Des Gair + Willie MacKenzie

Anniversaries: Shirley-Anne MacKenzie + George Smith