

27 December - John, Apostle & Evangelist - John 21.19b-25

Merciful Lord, cast your bright beams of light upon the Church: that, being enlightened by the teaching of your blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John, we may so walk in the light of your truth that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ your incarnate Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

28 December - The Holy Innocents - Matthew 2.13-18

Heavenly Father, whose children suffered at the hands of Herod, though they had done no wrong: by the suffering of your Son and by the innocence of our lives frustrate all evil designs and establish your reign of justice and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

More resources can be found through the church website
www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk

If you can help with a donation to either church (regular or one-off) we would be very grateful - you can do this on the front page of the church website, cash or cheques can be left at the Vicarage or the Office, or you can make a BACS payment from your bank account to ours' for details, contact Clive Lemmon (St Matthew's), Chris Jack (St Edmund's), Caroline or Peter

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The Parishes of St Edmund, Allestree
and St Matthew, Darley Abbey



Prayers for Advent and Christmas

Advent Sunday is 29 November. This is the Advent Collect, pray it every day.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

On the four Sundays of Advent, we light the Advent Wreath.

*On Advent Sunday we light the first candle and remember **The Patriarchs**, the men at the beginning of Israel's story. Why not read Genesis, the story of Abraham (11.26 to 25.11), or move into Exodus and read the story of Moses, or use this December to read the whole of the story of David (1 Samuel 16 to the end, all of 2 Samuel, and 1 Kings chapters 1 and 2)? God has been at work from the very beginning.*

God of Abraham and Sarah, and all the patriarchs of old, you are our Father too. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of David. Help us in preparing to celebrate his birth to make our hearts ready for your Holy Spirit to make his home among us. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. **Amen.**

*On the Second Sunday of Advent we remember **The Prophets**. You could read Isaiah - the whole book, or chapter 40 to the end. Too often we only have a passage or two as part of the Carol Service.*

God our Father, you spoke to the prophets of old of a Saviour who would bring peace. You helped them to

spread the joyful message of his coming kingdom. Help us, as we prepare to celebrate his birth, to share with those around us the good news of your power and love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. **Amen.**

*On the Third Sunday of Advent we light the third candle and remember **John the Baptist.** As Jesus' cousin his story is intertwined with Jesus in Luke chapters 1,3 and 7, and his death in Matthew 14.*

God our Father, you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age a son called John. He grew up strong in spirit, prepared the people for the coming of the Lord, and baptized them in the Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us, who have been baptized into Christ, to be ready to welcome him into our hearts, and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. **Amen.**

*On the Fourth Sunday of Advent we light the fourth candle and remember **The Blessed Virgin Mary.** Read her story (and that of Joseph) in Luke chapters 1 and 3, in Matthew 1 and 2 - and don't forget she was at the Crucifixion (Luke 23) and Resurrection (Luke 24).*

God our Father, the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that she was to be the mother of your Son. Though Mary was afraid, she responded to your call with joy. Help us, whom you call to serve you, to share like her in your great work of bringing to our world your love and healing. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. **Amen.**

*On Christmas Morning we light the central candle and give thanks for **The Birth of Christ.** Christ must make a difference to us and our lives, however it is we celebrate Christmas.*

God our Father, today the Saviour is born and those who live in darkness are seeing a great light. Help us, who greet the birth of Christ with joy, to live in the light of

your Son, and to share the good news of your love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Light who has come into the world. **Amen.**

*As well as reading the Bible passages, you could use the internet to find some art. At the start of the original lockdown I found **www.christian.art** and signed up to a daily email with a picture and commentary - recommended.*

You could search youtube everyday and listen to a piece of Christmas music from a different Cathedral - you could move geographically, starting with the choir of Truro Cathedral and ending with the choir of Newcastle Cathedral (or leave the Church of England and continue north to St Magnus Cathedral in Orkney). If you need a list of Cathedrals you can find one on Wikipedia. I've threatened that once I get my free bus pass I want to spend several months travelling by local bus from Truro to Newcastle via every Cathedral in England. Julie says I am going by myself.

*Remember that Christmas is not just English - if you have Christmas card contacts around this world (or even if you haven't) why not explore some Christmas traditions, writings and prayers from this wonderful world of ours'. CAFOD, the Catholic aid agency, produce an **Online Advent Calendar** which gives us a different view of faith and God - https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Advent-calendar?msclkid=556c8a3c6d2713fbc9a9d586dfdf972a&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=CFD_4_Prayer&utm_term=christmas%20prayer&utm_content=CFD_4_Prayer_Advent-calendar*

After Christmas Day has passed, we have a selection of Saints' Days:

26 December - The Feast of Stephen - Acts 7.51-end

Gracious Father, who gave the first martyr Stephen grace to pray for those who took up stones against him: grant that in all our sufferings for the truth we may learn to love even our enemies and to seek forgiveness for those who desire our hurt, looking up to heaven to him who was crucified for us, Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**