



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CHRIST THE KING

THE PRESBYTERY, 4 LORDS CROFT, AMESBURY, WILTS., SP47EP

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WELCOME TO CHRIST THE KING

We welcome visitors, family and friends to our Mass today.
We are glad you are joining us today.

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR-B)-2023

FROM THE DESK OF FATHER SAJI-A LIGHT IN DARKNESS This weekend marks the transition between Advent and Christmas time. We recall several familiar images that are attached to this time of year. I'd like to focus on the image that we are offered that Jesus is the light in the midst of darkness. We don't have to go too far to imagine what is the darkness of our time. We hear of wars and rebellions happening all over the world. We are also made aware of the divisions that are clearly present in our country. We are encouraged to live in fear of others. We are taught, from early years, to hate our enemies and to retaliate against those who harm us. Jesus attempts to offer a different message. The Christmas season is a privileged time for disciples to proclaim their "yes" to God. Many will return to Church this holiday, to be with family, to recognise that God is a part of their heritage. Like Mary, we are all called to trust God's faithfulness. We may not understand all that is happening in our lives, or what God is fully asking. We lack answers and still be hurt by part of our life journey. God promises to walk with us. As we celebrate his birth, he invites us to live simple lives of peace amidst all that darkness. Some of the darkness can seem overwhelming, but Jesus encourages us not to lose hope. Shortly after our celebration of Christmas day, we also remember the slaughter of the Holy Innocents, and the fleeing of the Holy Family away from the threats of the leaders of their time. Jesus and his family become refugees, strangers in a strange land. It is in the end, a choice to be a light in the midst of darkness. Any of us could find an excuse to simply be part of the darkness, and lose our hope. If we wish to carry the spirit of Christmas into the other days of our lives, it becomes a challenge to figure out how to embody hope, joy and peace into all the situations of our lives. Most of us can be kind and generous for one hour, or even one day, but committing ourselves to living a lifetime of that can be more difficult. It is very important to live one day at a time, choosing each day to be a light in the midst of darkness. Choose patience rather than abruptness. Choose forgiveness rather than holding the grudge. Choose generosity rather than stinginess. Choose compassion rather than hardheartedness. Choose hope rather than despair. It is wonderful when our feelings back up the choice but often we need to make the choice without the backup of our emotions. Make good choices for every moment, and we will build a world more filled with light than darkness. Have a Blessed Christmas! BE BLESSED AND BE A BLESSING

CHRISTMAS 2023 Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, At Christmas, we hear the proclamation: "For unto us a Saviour is born who is Christ and Lord." This good news of great joy is the reason for our renewed faith and hope. In a world experiencing so much unrest, a Saviour is born who announces peace, brings glad tidings, and comforts his people. In a nation that is divided, a Saviour is born who unites us as God's holy family, as brothers and sisters. In our lives, when we are overwhelmed by our crosses and sufferings, a Saviour is born who embraces us in his love and mercy with the strength and grace we need. And for all these gifts, the Lord asks so little in return. He simply wants us to strive every day to trust him, to be faithful, and to be instruments of his peace to all those we love and meet. What we do at Christmas teaches us the way. So, with the help of Mary and Joseph, strive to be what our Church and world need more than ever: holy families. Do so by loving and respecting one another and giving to each other the most precious gifts of all: your time and attention. As you have been forgiven, ask for the grace to forgive others, especially those who have offended you, so that no bitterness is within your heart. Continue the spirit of giving that is so prevalent at this time of year, especially as you share your resources and blessings with our brothers and sisters in most need. Dear friends in Christ, please be assured of a special remembrance at the Christmas Masses I will celebrate, and please pray for me. Through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, trust in the power of the Lord to renew and transform our world, nation, family and each one of us. May the peace that only Christ can give be yours at Christmas and always.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON: Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON: Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.

CHRISTMAS MASSES AND SERVICE TIMES-2023-2024

SUNDAY 24th December, Christmas Eve 5.30 pm Carols, 6.00 pm Family Mass (Children)

SUNDAY 24TH DECEMBER 11.30pm Carol Service 12.00am Midnight Mass

MONDAY 25th December, Christmas Day-9.30 am Mass and 11.00 am Mass

WELCOME TO CHRIST THE KING! We would like to extend a warm welcome to all our parishioners and visitors attending public Mass. Whether you are just passing through or looking for a spiritual home, we pray you find Christ the King inviting and spiritually uplifting. If you are attending Mass on a regular basis, we encourage you to register with the parish. Please call our parish office and start the conversation! To our visitors, we hope you enjoy your stay here in Amesbury. Our church is always open to you, your family, and friends. pax et bonum (peace and all good)

PARISH CONTRIBUTIONS AND GENEROSITY A big thank you for all your generous donations, which are greatly appreciated. If anyone would like to transfer to standing order or bank transfer, this would help to simplify our banking procedure. The Parish bank details are: Name: Christ the King Church, Amesbury, Bank: NatWest Account number 66286638 and Sort code-52-10-03. If you wish to remember the Parish in your Will, further information is available from the Parish Office.

CONFIRMATION - If you have a child that has just completed Year 8 (going into Yr 9 or above in September) and you wish to enrol them in the next programme, the deadline is February 2024.

CHILDREN'S LITURGY at Christ the King is at 11am Mass. The liturgy is for children in Year 3 and below, please note children younger than school age need to be accompanied by an adult.

PRAY FOR VOCATIONS Please do all you can to encourage priestly and religious vocations. Your prayers and support make a difference.

IN MEMORIAM Please remember in your prayers those who recently died and for all the deceased members of our family and parish, the souls in purgatory and those who died in service of our country. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. Amen.

Please pray for God's grace for those who are ill: Please also pray for an increase in vocations, especially in our diocese and our country.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION - If you have a Child that has just completed Year 2 (going into Yr 3 or above in September) and you wish to enrol them in the next programme, the deadline is November 2023.

CONFESSIONS/SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION In the Sacrament of Penance, the love and mercy of the Lord Jesus is made manifest in the forgiveness of sins, thereby reconciling the penitent with God and with his Church. Confession is every Saturday from 5.00pm-5.40pm or by appointment.

RED BOXES 2023: Through our Red Boxes and donations to Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries we are helping the Universal Church in reaching out to others in their desperate need. It is time for you to return the Red Mission Boxes to the Church in the coming weeks. Please make sure your name and address is written on the sticker at the bottom of the box. Please leave the box in the sacristy - not in the church porch - and you can pick it up again a week later. Thank You! God bless you!

REST IN PEACE May those who have died enter into the mercy of God and the joy of the Kingdom.

COMMUNITY, WE NEED YOU! DECEMBER PRAYER INTENTION We pray for families who will enjoy this holiday season together, and for those families who struggle or are less than ideal. We pray for safe gatherings and spaces for kinship to and flourish, and we pray for those who feel alone or have lost someone that they will find love and peace.

VISITS TO THE SICK If you cannot come to church because of illness, please be sure that we are notified so that we might minister to you either at home, hospital, or nursing home or in any care facility. Because of confidentiality issues, we cannot come to you unless requested to do so by you or your family.

A MERRY AND BLESSED CHRISTMAS I would like to wish you and your family a very Blessed Christmas and Happy, Healthy New Year. As we are upon the Christmas celebration of our Saviour's birth, my wishes for you are that the Christ Child may give you his choicest blessing of peace, health, and family and work relationships that assist you in becoming the saints that God wants you to be. With Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the angels, we come in wonder to gaze on the child who is our Saviour, Jesus Christ, our Lord. By accepting this in faith, we enter into the mystery of the Incarnation: Godmade-man in Jesus. Thank you for all of your kindness to me. I appreciate them in so many ways and pray to God for you. Thank you for your incredible generosity to the parish of Christ the King in 2023. With your kind support, our multifarious parish initiatives and projects were able to achieve a great deal of success. Please accept my sincerest gratitude for your willingness to share your blessings with others. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your families.

MASS SCHEDULE STARTING FROM 23RD DECEMBER 2023

SATURDAY 23RD DECEMBER MASS AT 6.00PM FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH

SUNDAY 24TH DECEMBER MASS AT 11.00AM JOAN (INTENTIONS) AND 5.30PM CAROL SINGING & 6.00PM FIRST MASS OF CHRISTMAS AND 11.30PM CAROL AND 12.00AM MIDNIGHT MASS

MONDAY 25TH DECEMBER CHRISTMAS DAY AT 9.30AM PEOPLE OF THE PARISH AND MASS AT 11.00AM

TUESDAY 26TH DECEMBER ADORATION AT 10.00AM AND MASS AT 11.00AM ST STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR JO CHAMBERS FAMILY'S INTENTIONS

WEDNESDAY 27TH DECEMBER ADORATION AT 9.00AM AND MASS AT 10.00AM MARGARET RYAN (HEALING)

THURSDAY 28TH DECEMBER ADORATION AT 9.00AM AND MASS AT 10.00AM MAUREEN TAYLOR (INTENTIONS)

FRIDAY 29TH DECEMBER ADORATION AT 9.00AM AND MASS AT 10.00AM ANN LARKE (BIRTHDAY INTENTIONS)

SATURDAY 30TH DECEMBER MASS AT 6.00PM FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH

SUNDAY 31ST DECEMBER MASS AT 11.00AM

HAPPY FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT/ MERRY CHRISTMAS! A brief reminder about our weekend Masses for the 4th Sunday in Advent and Christmas. The 4th Sunday in Advent Masses are Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. and Sunday morning, December 24 at 11:00 a.m. Christmas Masses begin on Sunday evening at 5:30 p.m. with Carols and Mass at 6:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Carols and Mass at 12.00am and Christmas Day, Monday, December 25 at 9.30a.m. and 11:00 a.m. I pray most of your Christmas preparation is complete. As for me, I still have much to do but always manage to get it done. Hopefully this year will be no exception. The day after Christmas is the Feast of St. Stephen, the First Martyr and Deacon in the church, which serves the reminder that following Jesus is not always easy. Stephen was a deacon in the church who teaches us that sometimes we are called to let go of possessions and break through any addictions to promote justice and serve the poor. My prayer for you is to have a blessed Christmas Season aware that the Christmas Season concludes on Monday, January 7 with the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus; therefore, enjoy the entire Season not just one day. Please keep in your prayers those who do not have the ability to enjoy this special season due to illness, loneliness, or misfortune. Luke's Gospel reading at Christmas liturgies brings forth the perfect sense of Christmas in that it was people who were poor and lowly who witnessed God come to earth in the humanity of Jesus. May their witnesses be an inspiration and motivation to us all.

THE HUMANITY OF GOD A customer walks into the post office wanting to mail a package for Christmas. “Two-day shipping will cost you £25.95 and get it there by Friday” said the man at the post office. The customer clearly looking to cut down on shipping costs replied, “The package does not have to get there until Saturday. Is there any way to make that happen?” The postal worker replied, “Sure. You can bring it back tomorrow.” Today we all take time to give gifts that were store purchased, arrived through the mail or delivered by an Amazon van or UPS to experience the joy that comes in giving and receiving. Sometimes forgotten in a Christmas celebration is the real gift of the day, which is the birth of Jesus. Jesus is God’s greatest present to humankind. Christian people engage in festivities on this special day that is expressed through gift giving, which is the way we give Jesus a gift; however, the important factor in Christmas is to recognise the face of Jesus in the person who receives our gift or gives a gift to us. This acknowledges that the real gift of Christmas is not the actual item in exchange, but the person who shares in the swapping of presents. It is for this reason that we thank people who provide presents with a hug, kiss, or words of thanks.

Christmas brings to light the power of God that broke through all laws known to humankind as our Creator sneaked into the world in the personhood of a human being named Jesus, which altered the direction of history. I believe that since Christmas is celebrated in an assortment of ways; Jesus frequently comes to us through the unexpected, which is often through an individual seeking comfort due to an unfortunate situation that occurred throughout the past year. Taking time to lighten the burden of one who struggles during the festivities of Christmas may bolster up the spirits of that person. This plants the seed of a Saviour, and makes Christmas a celebration that reflects the word and light of the Christ-child, which lulls us away from the gospel of possessions, power and oppression; and, leads to peace, harmony and fellowship. In a world haunted by war, guns, violence, and terrorism, as well as others who dismiss the presence of God, Christmas brings people face to face with the truth of Christian faith, which is the mystery of the Incarnation (derived from the Latin words for “enfleshing;”) the enfleshing of God in the personhood of Jesus. In an article printed in the New York Times, Friday, December 15, 2023 titled, “During War, We Must Press the Theological Truth,” Esau McCaulley, states, “Spiritual leaders should encourage us to see the humanity in all people, even our enemies...A central teaching of Christianity arising from Genesis, a text it shares with its Jewish neighbours, maintains that every person, regardless of country of origin, is made in the image of God deserving of respect...The belief in the inestimable worth of human beings can be a moral anchor in the turbulent seas of conflicting concerns.” These words invite us to go beyond the normal expectations to make Christmas special since at no other time of year is there so much generosity conveyed through distributions of food, clothing, money, and gifts for those without adequate resources to embrace blessings that most of us enjoy. The theologian Fr. Karl Rahner, once defined Christmas as “the ineffable outrageousness of the absolute Godhead in person falling stark naked into our narrow creature hood.” If we take this statement to heart, we imitate the Christ-child as a shining ray of light that dominates over darkness in every aspect of life. This is the promise of Christmas and the reason for making it so merry as it is an invitation to see the way God acts in our lives so that we become part of the Christmas story. It becomes Christ born anew in our lives right now, and the fact that as God became human, all creation received new dignity and a deeper connection to the Divine. This Christmas search for the presence of God in some unlikely places and circumstances that include the vulnerable, young, poor, wounded, frail, and defenseless. Celebrate the beauty of Christmas every day, not just today.

DEAR PARISHIONERS, We celebrate the beautiful feast of Christmas, beginning this afternoon on this Christmas Eve. We celebrate the triumph of light and joy and love. Is there any other holiday or holy day that we celebrate so thoroughly – here in our churches – out there in our villages and streets and neighbourhoods, with friends and neighbours – in our homes with families and loved ones – and in our hearts, with graces and sentiments that often we cannot put in words, but which we know with certainty and conviction? Christmas is all that. We celebrate with the signs and symbols of the season – with the beauty of the church – with the wreaths and the lights and bright colours of Christmas – again, here and at home. We want everything in its proper place – the way it always is. Family traditions carefully preserved – a reassuring source of identity and stability. We know who we are because of these customs. We celebrate not only in the beauty we see, but in the beauty of sound and song as well. What would Christmas be without our carols? We recognise them readily – like old friends. Their familiarity gives us a sense of security, too. Everything is in its correct place. We’ve sung these songs before; we’ve seen these decorations before – we feel safe, untroubled – they tell us that everything’s OK. However, it wasn’t that way on the first Christmas, for Mary and Joseph. Things were not OK. Theirs was a society troubled and frightened – Roman Imperial soldiers occupying Galilee and Judea – they were to be counted as so much chattel, displaced from Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem at the whim of the Emperor. The stable was not the romantic, rustic, cute scene we set up in our homes and churches every year. If truth be told, Mary and Joseph did not want to be there. They were frightened, perhaps overwhelmed by all that was happening to them. But in the midst of it all, the eternal Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, steps out of his perfect heaven, out of his faultless eternity, into our very imperfect humanity – our frightened, angry, ashamed, vain, conflicted world – this year more than ever. He enters into our very uncertain, often sordid history – corrupt politics, economic poverty, social exploitation, military intimidation, social and ethnic prejudice – our world, our lives – warts and all! He brings his Divinity to our humanity – and the world will never be the same again – we can never be the same again. That’s the message of our celebration: he is Emmanuel, God-with-Us.

We are not alone. He has made us his own, as he has made himself our own. But if Christ is born, he is born because of those real needs of our life – not as a reward for our complacency. We have Christmas because, like Mary and Joseph, in many ways, in many places, in many lives, things are not OK. What are the needs we ask the Child of Bethlehem to answer for us? For our families? If everything is OK for us, if we have no needs, no hurts, no fears, then why do we celebrate this birth of God’s Son as our brother? Where does our world, do our families, do our lives search for the peace and joy we sing about this day? And how can we bring that peace and joy, that healing and hope to birth in our lives and our homes? Because Christmas also tells us that as God chose our humanity to make his love real in our world through his Incarnation, so our flesh must continue to be the means God’s love still works in lives and homes and hearts today. Christmas happens for us. Christmas must also happen because of us. May Christ be born in your homes and hearts this Christmas. May you feel his nearness in those loved ones near to you – and in those loved ones perhaps far away, but close in affection. A Blessed Christmas to you and your families and loved ones. Pax et Bonum! May the Saviour’s birth bring you Peace and Joy!

HOLY DAY OBLIGATION For this year, the faithful have two Mass obligations (the Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 23/24, and Christmas – December 24/25) which will need to be fulfilled by their participation in two Masses. In short, attending Mass on the evening of Sunday, December 24 fulfils either the Sunday obligation or the Christmas obligation, but not both! No one, whether shepherd or wise man, can approach God here below except by kneeling before the manger at Bethlehem and adoring him hidden in the weakness of a new-born child.

GOSPEL MEDITATION-Life is troubling. Who among us has not struggled with anxiety and difficulties, sometimes massive ones? I certainly have, as have many of my loved ones. If we do, does this mean that we don’t trust the Lord or just need to toughen up? I don’t think so. How encouraging for us anxious and troubled souls to hear Luke describe the Blessed Mother Mary in these words, “But she was greatly troubled at what was said.” An archangel has visited her. An inconceivable promise has been made to her. Her life has become wildly unpredictable, perhaps more so than any person before or since. The first point for us: the Lord is with her precisely when she is troubled. Her anxiousness and God’s presence are not mutually exclusive. Christianity is not about a trance-like robotic indifference. It’s about the presence of divine love. Even in — especially in — troubled circumstances. Our troubled soul can become our greatest treasure. What seems so troubling at first to Mary becomes the best possible thing, Jesus, the Saviour and Lord, is now her son. All the difficulties and troubles remain, and yet her movement into the fullness of God is accelerated. What is troubling you right now? This scripture invites us now, this week, to hear the Lord’s messenger say to us what he said to Mary, “Do not be afraid! You have found favour with God.”

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, Thank you for your loving witness to others as we keep Jesus in the celebration of Christmas! We celebrate the final Sunday in Advent before the celebration of Christmas and the Christmas Season which, this liturgical year, will continue until Monday, January 8, 2024, The Baptism of the Lord. In our Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Advent, we hear of Gabriel’s message to Mary which seems to be an announcement of pure joy. Who among the women of that time did not dream of becoming the mother of the Messiah? However, those words foretell a great trial to Mary because she was betrothed. In the law of Moses, having a son while only being betrothed, Mary would have transgressed the Law and the punishment for women was stoning (cf. Dt 22:20-21). What is Mary’s response? “Let it be to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). In the language in which the Gospel is written, it is not simply “let it be”, it is not a resignation. Rather Mary expresses a strong desire, a sincere desire. She does not take her time, she does not keep God waiting, she does not delay in her answer. Recalling the words of the Virgin, we have the invitation to move closer towards Christmas and allow Jesus to direct our lives closer to the will of God. During the Christmas Octave and while many are on vacation, please note the adjusted weekday Mass schedule.

In looking ahead to the following week, January 1, 2024, Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, occurs on a Monday. This year, the obligation to attend Mass on this date is abrogated, in accord with the complementary norm to canon 1246 §2 confirmed. Thus, you are not obliged to go to Mass on Monday, Jan. 1, but you are most welcome to do so! Also, thank you for your witness to the love of Jesus and your support to your brothers and sisters in the Church. As a community, we are to help each other in our pilgrim journey to our heavenly homeland one for us by the Saviour who was born for us on Christmas Day.

REMEMBER OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS- FRIENDLY VISITORS If you are a parishioner who has empathy for our older population, please consider visiting a homebound member of our parish. The days can be long for them and many of their family members and friends have passed. Probably, more often than not, many have constant pain and suffer from chronic illnesses. However, they still have the need for love, compassion, and knowing someone cares about them. Just asking them a few questions can help start a friendly conversation, such as, “What world events had the most impact on you when you were growing up?” “What chores were you expected to do as a child?” “What food or drink was a special treat when you were a teenager?” The list is endless! We usually ask the visitor to be in contact with their “new friend” every two weeks and visits should be about an hour. Please contact me at the email address above, if you have the name of any parishioner who is homebound or in a care home and would like to have one of our Friendly Visitors stop by to share conversation and prayer.

CHILDREN’S STEWARDSHIP Do Your Children See You Give? Every parent wants to raise children who share and give generously. When our children someday meet God face to face we want to know that they will hear Jesus say to them the same words the master said to those who used their talents wisely, “Well done, my good and faithful servant...Come, share your master’s joy.” (Matt 25:21) However, raising a generous child is a challenge in a society that constantly teaches children to want more and more things for themselves. One of the key factors in teaching children to be generous is to let them see you giving. After all, children mimic what they see, not what they hear. Today many donations to the parish Offertory may be made electronically, monthly, quarterly, or via standing order. Thus, children may never actually see their parents give. A child who never sees a parent place an envelope in the Offertory could grow up thinking, “My parents never gave any support to the Church. Why should I?” Therefore, it is important that parents talk with children about the charitable gifts the family makes. If you would like to increase your giving you might even ask your kids about ways the family budget could be adjusted so that there is more to share with God. Their suggestions might surprise you!

CHRISTMAS MASS AND SERVICE TIMES-2023-2024

- Saturday 23rd December, **Vigil Mass at 6.00 pm**
- Sunday 24th December, **Mass at 11.00am**
- Sunday 24th December, **Christmas Eve 5.30 pm Carols, 6.00 pm Family Mass** (Children)
- 11.30pm **Carol Service**
- 12.00am **Midnight Mass**
- Monday 25th December, **Christmas Day-9.30 am Mass and 11.00 am Mass**
- Tuesday 26th December, **Feast of St Stephen**, The First Martyr 11.00am Mass
- Wednesday 27th December **Feast of St John the Apostle**, Evangelist 10.00am Mass
- Thursday 28th December **Feast of the Holy Innocents**, Martyrs Mass at 10.00am
- Friday 29th December **St Thomas Becket**, Bishop, Martyr Mass at 10.00am **ANN LARKE BIRTHDAY INTENTION**
- Saturday 30th December **Vigil Mass** for Sunday Mass at 6.00pm
- Sunday 31st December **Mass** at 11.00am (New Year’s Eve)

Monday 1st January **New Year’s Day- 2024 MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD** Mass at 11.00am–**FOR ALL OUR FAMILIES**