



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CHRIST THE KING

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

PARISH PRIEST: Rev Saji Mathew
saji.mathew@cliftondiocese.com

Parish Office Telephone: 01980 622177
Website: Amesbury.cliftondiocese.com
PARISH MOBILE 07412604880

WELCOME TO CHRIST THE KING

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

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (YEAR-B)-2023

FROM THE DESK OF FATHER SAJI- COME ONE, COME ALL! From the beginning, the birth of Jesus is intended to be a gift for all people, in all places, and at all times. The idea of being connected with God, as being exclusive, is unique, and was set aside by the birth of Jesus, and the invitation of all kinds of people to come and worship him. We, the people of God, ought to have as our intention and our goal to be inclusive and inviting of all people on the face of the earth. Is our time to renew that dedication to the universal call to holiness both for ourselves, and any other human being?. This might be a most appropriate time to examine our willingness, and our ability to take the gift that we've been given, and to share it with other people. For some reason, we were given a gift of faith, and that faith was nurtured in one way or another, until we have got to this point in our lives. If we're not careful, we can begin to be possessive, and even a little arrogant about the fact that we have been given that gift. We can, from time to time, become afraid of those who are different than we are, and even see them as a threat to our faith. If we really did believe in the power of God and in the end dwelling in the Holy Spirit, we would not be moved by fear, but by courage and boldness and excitement. For us to be able to share our faith, we have to be somewhat aware and able to be verbal about the difference it has made in our life to come to know Jesus as our own personal Lord and Saviour. Somebody, for some reason, decided to share their gift of faith with you and me. I am positive, especially in my own case, that it's not because I earned it, or I am better than anybody else. I believe the people who shared their faith with me in such a nurturing way knew the gift that they had, and knew that they had to share it with other people. I'm so glad that they did, and I consider it an incredible gift that they have given to me throughout my life. In fact, being present in this community has continued to nurture my faith and help me to grow in my relationship with Jesus. On this Feast of the Epiphany, can we each take some time to decide how we will share the gift of faith that we've been given? Can we look around our lives and see the difference that having a relationship with Jesus has made for each of us? Can we imagine someone that we know who would really benefit from our sharing of our testimony of faith? What words would we use to express the gift of Jesus in our lives? How might we speak about that in a way that would not sound haughty or arrogant? In the same way that the birth of Jesus was revealed to the shepherds and the magi, it is our responsibility and privilege to shine the brilliance of the light of Jesus in all the areas of our lives. Imagine the impact it would have on our families, our church communities, our neighbourhoods and world, if we truly shared the fruits of the personal relationship with Jesus Christ that we have with others. Enjoy this New Year of faith and revelation. Will you choose to be an active part of it? Have a great weekend and 2024. BE BLESSED AND BE A BLESSING

WHITE FLOWER APPEAL-2024 13/14 January-White Flower Appeal 2024-The Society for the protection of Unborn children (SPUC) will be holding its annual appeal next weekend. SPUC's vision is for a world where abortion is unthinkable. This year's appeal calls for the Government to end the pills-by-post DIY abortion policy. As well as ending the lives of precious babies, this policy lacks safeguards against illegal let-term abortions, and puts mothers at physical and psychological risk. 86percent of GPs are concerned that this scheme leaves women vulnerable to coerced abortion. Please be as generous as you can to help SPUC defend unborn babies and their mothers by highlighting this urgent crisis. There will be a retiring collection for the worthy of SPUC's White Flower Appeal next weekend.

CHRIST THE KING 200 CLUB-NEW MEMBERS ARE VERY WELCOME! The 200 Club was set up over ten years ago, to raise funds for our Church and School, with half the money raised given out in three cash prizes each month, and the other half divided equally between the Church and School each December. During 2023 we had 93 members, with more members, monthly prizes will increase, but more importantly we will raise more funds for the church and the school. The cost is £12 per year for one number in the draw each month. Carol Crossland will be collecting money after masses throughout January, alternatively this can be placed in an envelope, clearly marked 200 Club, with your full name and telephone number, and left with Father Saji at Church, posted, or handed in to the school office, clearly marked in an envelope. We also will accept bank transfers (please state Name, and Church or School when making your payment) Sort Code 52-10-03 Account No 66287715 Please note this IS NOT the same as the account used by Fr Saji for donations each week. Thank you to everyone for taking part. Carol Crossland

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON: Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come; and Kingship is in his grasp, and power and dominion.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: All nations shall fall prostrate before you, O Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! We saw the star as it rose and have come to do the Lord homage. Alleluia

COMMUNION ANTIPHON: We have seen his star in the East, and have come with gifts to adore the Lord.!

volunteers serving in all these positions. Please consider lending your talents! Training for all these ministries is available, and there is always a priest or our Liturgical or parish team leaders, present on the weekends for questions or concerns. Requirements (with the exception of Altar Servers) are that you are a fully initiated Catholic and have completed your training and background check through the Diocese. If you are interested in volunteering, or would like to learn more about each of these ministries, please contact Father Saji.

ORGANIST/PIANIST NEEDED Christ The King Church is in need of an organist and/or pianist who could fill-in as needed. If you would like to contribute to this most important ministry, please contact Father Saji Mathew.

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.

PEACE SUNDAY 2024 is Sunday 14 January and the theme chosen by Pope Francis is 'Artificial Intelligence and Peace'. Pax Christi have produced a series of resources to mark the day. Whilst this might seem a strangely technical theme, we know that we do need to think about the consequences of the advances in AI for peace and justice. More details: Peace Sunday 2024 - Catholic Bishops' Conference (cbcew.org.uk)

MASS SCHEDULE STARTING FROM 6TH JANUARY 2023

SATURDAY 6TH JANUARY MASS AT 6.00PM FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH

SUNDAY 7TH JANUARY MASS AT 11.00AM THE ABBOTT FAMILY

MONDAY 8TH JANUARY ADORATION AT 9.00AM AND MASS AT 10.00AM LENNY GORDON, RIP

TUESDAY 9TH JANUARY ADORATION AT 9.00AM AND MASS AT 10.00AM CAROL DRENAN (HEALING AND WELL-BEING) AND REQUIEM MASS AT 1.00PM AVELINA CAMFIELD, RIP

WEDNESDAY 10TH JANUARY PLEASE NOTE NO MASS

THURSDAY 11TH JANUARY ADORATION AT 9.00AM AND MASS AT 10.00AM GAY TARRANT (INTENTIONS)

FRIDAY 12TH JANUARY ADORATION AT 9.00AM AND MASS AT 10.00AM JO CHAMBERS (INTENTIONS)

SATURDAY 13TH JANUARY MASS AT 6.00PM FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH

SUNDAY 7TH JANUARY MASS AT 11.00AM

KINGSHIP OF CHRIST: Responding to the Cry of the Earth online formation session-Lumen Gentium teaches that all the baptised participate in Christ's kingly office. We can grow comfortable with calling Christ the King, and we think of it as a cosmic abstraction. But what is Christ's kingship in a more concrete sense? And how are we called to live that reality in our daily lives? The Department of Adult Education and Evangelisation is offering an online formation session which links the Kingship of Christ with caring for our common home. Webinar: Wednesday 24 January, 7.30-8.45pm.

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.

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 January 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.

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

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.

NEW TO THE AREA. We look forward to personally meeting you. Please take time after Mass or whenever you may be present for parish activities to introduce yourself to the members of the parish and the parish priest.

NOT BEEN ACTIVE. If you are inactive in the practice of your Catholic faith, we encourage you to return. If you would like to speak with someone on the parish priest, please do not hesitate to contact the parish priest or any one of the parish team members

RECEIVING THE SACRAMENTS. If a previous marriage has kept you from receiving the Sacraments, we invite you to contact one of the priests or deacons. In most cases we can work with you toward a favourable solution so that you can again receive the Sacraments of the Church.

HELP NEEDED COME AT WEEKEND MASSES Have you ever considered assisting at weekend Masses by serving as a Lector, Eucharistic Minister, Sacristan, Usher, or Altar Server? We need more

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR GOD It is hard to believe but this Monday, January 8 puts closure on the long awaited Christmas Season. I pray your Christmas went well and that Santa provided any toy, item or piece of clothing that you anticipated receiving. The Christmas Season renders memories which generates joy to our lives that comes from people who make the Season come alive through their faith in the birth of the Christ child. As anticipated, I was saturated with cookies, chocolates, baked goods, ethnic foods and bottles of wine and spirits that came from people wanting to share their love with me. I extend my gratefulness to you for making Christmas so special in my life through these lovely treats, but most of all for the reverence and prayerfulness brought to the Christmas liturgies in that they were a high point in my year. As most students have returned to school after a healthy break, there is a story about a 6-year-old boy named Alex who returns to school in the aftermath of spending Christmas holiday at Disney World. His teacher asks the class what they did throughout the Christmas Season. Alex stands up and declares to the entire class: "I went to heaven and saw God!" When asked to explain his comment, the boy comments, "I took my first plane ride during Christmas and recalled all that my parents had taught me pertaining to the fact that God lives above the clouds. Therefore, as the plane soared over the clouds I shouted out to all passengers on board the flight, "We are in heaven, be on the lookout for God." It is easy to be on the lookout for God during the Christmas Season since God is so visible through environment, music, and good deeds that shine forth in the cheerfulness of the Season. However, once the music ends, and decorations are in boxes, the only reminder of the Christmas Season for many comes through invoices from MasterCard, Visa, other credit, and store charge accounts. January renders a month to keep from packing up all the values that people try to implement throughout Christmastime, which often like our Christmas ornaments and decorations get tossed into the attic or closet of our minds. Some of these items include time with family, attention to needs of acquaintances, co-workers, neighbours and fellow students; and the cheerfulness that most try to exhibit throughout the routines during Christmas. I commonly find individuals in assisted care homes, hospitals, and rehab centres flocked with attention throughout the Christmas Season, but given little companionship and gifts during the cold, dark days of January.

In highlighting the Baptism of Jesus which gets celebrated on Monday, the day brings to light a review of the way our baptisms have steered our lifestyles. As the Baptism of Jesus inaugurated his mission, living out the Baptismal promises made for us does likewise through a review in the manner that we respond to our everyday experiences within relationships, employment, school and church. Many of us can easily forget that a Christian Baptism navigates our lives to particular ministries within the church as it signifies the fact that our Baptism stimulates us to ongoing spiritual development in our personal discipleship as Christians so that there is ongoing discernment to establish greater ways to use our talents, abilities, and desires to serve God through the way we treat others. The word "baptism" comes from the Greek word, "baptisma" meaning "plunge" or "dip". Early Christians followed Jesus' example literally by walking into pools of water emerging cleansed and purified, which readied them to begin new life in Christ. At the Council of Florence in 1431 it was declared that "Baptism" holds the first place among all sacraments in that it is the door of the spiritual life. As the Christmas Season winds down and gives way to the Season of Ordinary Time, it plants a seed to open ourselves to the call of God, and ponder the next step God challenges us to take in our spiritual journeys aware that sometimes the road is bumpy, however it invites us to leap high above the clouds to be on the lookout for God in uncharted and unexercised ways.

PILGRIMS OF HOPE:The 2025 Jubilee in Clifton-Pope Francis has decreed that 2025 will be a Jubilee, with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope." But what, exactly, is a jubilee, and why does the Church periodically celebrate them? What about the "2024 Year of Prayer," or all those documents from the Second Vatican Council?

DEAR FRIENDS There is much to be grateful for as we enter into the new year, and especially good to think of how we are blessed beyond merit by God, "God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). You might be familiar with the phrase love the sinner, hate the sin, which comes from a letter (211) from St. Augustine where he says, "with due love for the persons and hatred of the sin". I invite you to keep this in mind with the recent Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on Dec. 18, 2023. There are many opinions about this document and I encourage you to read it, which is about 10 pages. Many people will read what they want in it, but please see what it says. Much of this document is speaking about different kinds of blessings. Some people are simply asking for a blessing as in asking for help to trust in God who loves us unconditionally despite the temptations they face. The Declaration issued today by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) articulated a distinction between liturgical (sacramental) blessings, and pastoral blessings, which may be given to persons who desire God's loving grace in their lives. The Church's teaching on marriage has not changed, and this declaration affirms that, while also making an effort to accompany people through the imparting of pastoral blessings because each of us needs God's healing love and mercy in our lives." Allow me to share with you a few quotes from *Fiducia Supplicans*: "[T]he Church does not have the power to impart blessings on unions of persons of the same sex" (par. 5). "Within the horizon outlined here appears the possibility of blessings for couples in irregular situations and for couples of the same sex, the form of which should not be fixed ritually by ecclesial authorities to avoid producing confusion with the blessing proper to the Sacrament of Marriage. In such cases, a blessing may be imparted that not only has an ascending value but also involves the invocation of a blessing that descends from God upon those who—recognising themselves to be destitute and in need of his help—do not claim a legitimation of their own status, but who beg that all that is true, good, and humanly valid in their lives and their relationships be enriched, healed, and elevated by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

These forms of blessing express a supplication that God may grant those aids that come from the impulses of his Spirit—what classical theology calls "actual grace"—so that human relationships may mature and grow in fidelity to the Gospel, that they may be freed from their imperfections and frailties, and that they may express themselves in the ever-increasing dimension of the divine love" (par. 31). "[O]ne should neither provide for nor promote a ritual for the blessings of couples in an irregular situation [same sex]. At the same time, one should not prevent or prohibit the Church's closeness to people in every situation in which they might seek God's help through a simple blessing. In a brief prayer preceding this spontaneous blessing, the ordained minister could ask that the individuals have peace, health, a spirit of patience, dialogue, and mutual assistance—but also God's light and strength to be able to fulfil his will completely" (par. 38). May we continue to pray for each other as we seek to follow Christ with our whole hearts.

FR JOE O'BRIEN R.I.P. Please remember in your prayers, Fr. Joe O'Brien who died on 27th December 2023 in a nursing home in Mitchelstown, Ireland.

DEAR PARISHIONERS, Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. One can't think of the Epiphany without recourse to the Magi – the Wise Men from the East who brought the Christ Child their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Mention of the Magi travelling by the guidance of a star and presenting their gifts brings to my mind two favourite pieces of literature – very different, but having the Magi in common. The first is the 1905 O. Henry short story *The Gift of the Magi*. William Sidney Porter wrote the short stories for which he is remembered under the pseudonym O. Henry. He had a checkered personal life, at one point having to flee to Honduras when he was wanted for embezzlement. He returned to the United States when he learned of his wife's terminal illness. He served a light prison sentence and upon release settled in New York, where he made his trademark the short stories that were known for their everyday settings and characters and for their humorous, but sometimes grim and ironic twists of plot. *The Gift of the Magi* is one of his best. Spoiler Alert: I am going to give away the ending, so if you want to enjoy the story on its own merits, stop reading here! The story concerns a young married couple, Jim and Della. They are deeply in love with each other, as well as deeply in debt. It is Christmas Eve and neither has a gift for the other. Della has seen a chain that would complement Jim's pride-and-joy pocket watch perfectly, but she has less than two dollars to spend. She decides to sell her luxuriant long hair to a wig maker to raise the money for the watch chain. She makes the decision because as much as she loves her hair, she loves Jim more. She sells her hair and buys the chain. When Jim arrives home for dinner and sees the change in her appearance, she explains that she sold her hair for his Christmas gift, and presents him with the watch chain. Jim is taken aback, not just by the extent of her sacrifice, but because he has just come from selling his watch to buy a set of jeweled tortoise shell hair pins that he thought would suit Della's long chestnut locks perfectly. He receives a watch chain, but no longer possesses the watch. She receives the hair pins, but no longer has the long hair they would hold in place. Certainly a clever and ironic twist of the plot.

But is it tragic? I think not, because each is willing to let go of something treasured for the sake of the happiness of the beloved. I have no doubt that they would be more in love with each other than before. Often for love, we must be willing to let go. The second piece of writing is of a much different genre and tone – not as easy a read as the short story. It is T.S. Eliot's poem, *The Journey of the Magi*. Eliot wrote the poem in 1927, after a personal religious conversion and that led him to the Church of England. Religion would remain a major theme throughout his writing. The poem is written as a dramatic monologue, told from the point of view of one of the Magi. He speaks of birth and death. The journey was a difficult one, with freezing nights in the mountains and scorching days in the deserts. There is a kind of dying in their travels – dying to an old way of life in comfortable palaces on terraced slopes. And also dying to a former way of thinking, a former religion of astrology and magic. They would never be the same again because of their journey to see this long-awaited, long-prophesied Child. Their old way of life would die. They would return to their kingdoms, but life would be changed. And they journey because of birth – not just the birth of the Child (and Eliot sees the shadow of the cross and his eventual death present at the Child's birth) but a birth for them – their religious rebirth after this encounter with the Divine Child. They die to their former way of life to be reborn to new faith. Eliot did not find faith always a pleasant, satisfying experience. Often it entailed great personal sacrifice, uncertainty, even loneliness and alienation in a post-Christian society. Perhaps he is reflecting on his own recent conversion experience.

Faith entails letting go, as indeed love entailed letting go for Jim and Della in the short story. Jesus would say the same of discipleship: Unless you take up your cross daily and follow in my footsteps, you cannot be my disciple. . . Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. Letting go of the old – part of love and faith for each one of us if we claim to be His disciples.

CREATING A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. This celebration serves the reminder that every human life is a journey in which every step along the way is a revelation of God's presence. The Epiphany spins light on the way three foreigners leave their land to follow a star and discover great courage throughout their journey. These celebrations also remind us that the world segregates people along many lines which include the weak from the powerful, the rich from the poor, and the black from the white. The story of the Magi, unique to Matthew's Gospel, represent people of all nations in the same manner that the Shepherds in Luke's Christmas Gospel represent God's revelation to the Jewish people. The message of the Magi in Matthew's Gospel makes a theological statement that the initial people to do homage to the Saviour were foreigners. The Epiphany is a significant day on the church calendar as it opens our eyes to universal salvation (Christ was made known to the Gentiles (non-Jews)). It also points out that believers stand alongside the Magi in that each of us has a star to follow along our life journey without knowledge of where it is going to lead; but, faith renders hope that it will steer us to the Christ-Child regardless of any detours such as the Magi experienced with King Herod. This Sunday is called "Epiphany" because the Magi experienced an "epiphany" realising the truth about God. Since the word, "Epiphany" is defined as a "sudden, intuitive perception or insight into the meaning of something, or an instantaneous occurrence" it sparks a connection with the Magi. All people have epiphanies anytime a light goes off that engenders understanding to something that was not understood. Like King Herod in today's Gospel, it is easy to go through the motions and appear that we are interested in doing the right thing, but in reality we struggle to move out of our comfort zones to make significant changes in our life patterns throughout a New Year. Although most of the world celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6, which is the twelfth day of Christmas; in our country the feast is transferred to a Sunday, which opens the door for a greater number of people to share in this meaningful celebration. As the Magi journeyed to find the Saviour, the church takes time to encounter Christ in some uncomfortable ways through the faces of migrants. This includes immigrants, refugees, children, and victims and survivors of human trafficking. This gives Catholics an opportunity to honour and learn about diverse communities of the church and the work that the Catholic Church undertakes to serve immigrants and refugees... the week serves as both a time for prayer and action to highlight the contributions of immigrants and vulnerable populations. The week invites us to render respect to migrants and see them as persons rather than burdens or annoyances.

It is common in our society to forget that migrants belong to the same Catholic Church as we do, and that our Catholic identity is not based on where we live, but in our faith in Jesus. Immigration is about real people who are trying to find a better life and a new beginning. As Pope Francis has stated, "Each migrant has a name, a face, a story." Welcoming immigrants is an essential part of Catholic Social Teaching, and reflects the Biblical tradition to "welcome a stranger." In this New Year the Feast of the Epiphany launches a tremendous challenge to evaluate the gifts that we offer to the Saviour. As the church puts closure on the Christmas Season with the celebration of the Baptism of Jesus tomorrow, January 8, it is worthwhile to equate our gifts of love, mercy, and kindness to the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The message of the Christmas Season is to permit God to upset some of our well planned tomorrows as is so evident in the life of the Magi. In your celebration of Epiphany, breathe new life into each day that glows like a star into the places and people you come across in 2024 so that in the words of today's Letter to the Ephesians, "All are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.