

King attends special Advent service at Farm Street Church



His Majesty King Charles III has attended a special Advent service at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Mayfair, central London, co-hosted by the Catholic Charity that supports persecuted Christians, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

The service took place on Tuesday, 17 December, and celebrated the courage and perseverance of the Christian Communities of the Middle East and the diaspora, and reflected on the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Mosul and the Nineveh Plains in northern Iraq by Daesh (ISIS).

After the service, The King was introduced to representatives of the London-based Iraqi Christian diaspora, including individuals who suffered persecution and forced displacement when Daesh seized the Nineveh Plains.

His Majesty also met with a cross-section of Farm Street parishioners and those they support.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, President of the Bishops' Conference, gave the concluding prayer at the service, while His Excellency Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendia, the Papal Nuncio to the UK, gave the final blessing.

Dr Caroline Hull, national director at ACN (UK), said: "Throughout their long history dating back to the 1st century, the Christians of Iraq have been no strangers to suffering. But little could prepare them for the terrors that would be inflicted both on them and so many other communities in recent years."

Dr Hull added: "Since his time as Prince of Wales, The King has shown profound and unstinting compassion, going out of his way to hear the personal stories of the afflicted faithful."

ACN has supported the rebuilding of churches and homes in the Christian town of Qaraqosh and other settlements in the Nineveh Plains, and also helped establish the Catholic University in Erbil in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

Dr Hull said: "The journey towards restoration and renewal has been a long and sometimes painful one – and there is still a long way to go towards full recovery."

"But that they have achieved so much and completed the work so quickly is a tribute to the compassion, the care and concern their friends and benefactors have shown them. Such help came at a time when they sorely needed it."

For more, visit: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/king-attends-special-advent-service-in-london/> (An excerpt from <https://www.cbcew.org.uk>)

A Mother's Greeting



On this last Sunday before Christmas, the Church's Liturgy reveals the true identity of our Redeemer:

He is, as today's First Reading says, the "ruler . . . whose origin is from . . . ancient times." He will come from Bethlehem, where David was born of Jesse the Ephrathite and anointed king (see Ruth 4:11–17; 1 Samuel 16:1–13; 17:1; Matthew 2:6).

God promised that an heir of David would reign on his throne forever (see 2 Samuel 7:12–13; Psalm 89; Psalm 132:11–12).

Jesus is that heir, the One the prophets promised would restore the scattered tribes of Israel into a new kingdom (see Isaiah 9:5–6; Ezekiel 34:23–25, 30; 37:35). He is "the shepherd of Israel" sung of in today's Psalm. From His throne in heaven, He has "come to save us."

Today's Epistle tells us that He is both the Son of David and the only "begotten" Son of God, come "in the flesh" (see also Psalm 2:7). He is also our "high priest," from the mold of the mysterious Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High," who blessed Abraham at the dawn of salvation history (see Psalm 110:4; Genesis 14:18–20).

All this is recognized by John when he leaps for joy in his mother's womb. Elizabeth, too, is filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. She recognizes that in Mary "the mother of my Lord" has come to her. We hear in her words another echo of the Psalm quoted in today's Epistle (see Psalm 2:7). Elizabeth blesses Mary for her faith that God's Word would be fulfilled in her.

Mary marks the fulfilment not only of the angel's promise to her, but of all God's promises down through history. Mary is the one they await in today's First Reading—"she who is to give birth." She will give birth this week, at Christmas. And the fruit of her womb should bring us joy—she is the mother of our Lord.

Scott Hann



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
Pastoral Area

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR C (WK IV)

Entrance Antiphon Is 45:8

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.

First Reading: Micah 5:2-5

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 80

Bring us back, O God; let your face shine forth, and we shall be saved.

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

Gospel Acclamation: Lk 1:38

Alleluia, alleluia!

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.

Alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

Communion Antiphon: Is 7:14

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

SATURDAY 21st December ... St Peter Canisius

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Vocations

4:30 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Charles Brian-Boys RIP (Derek & Gillian Snoxall)

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Marie Clare Trevor RIP

SUNDAY 22nd December ... Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... People of the Parish

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford ... Charles Brian-Boys RIP (Derek & Gillian Snoxall)

MONDAY 23rd December ... NO MASS

TUESDAY 24th December ... Christmas Eve

5:00 pm Family Mass English Martyrs Didcot

8:00 pm Christmas Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

11:00 pm Christmas Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

WEDNESDAY 25th December ... The Nativity of the Lord

9:00 am Christmas Day Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:00 am Christmas Day Mass St John Wallingford

THURSDAY 26th December ... St Stephen

12:00 noon Mass St John Wallingford

FRIDAY 27th December ... St John

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

SATURDAY 28th December ... The Holy Innocents

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

4:30 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

SUNDAY 29th December ... The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... People of the Parish

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford



Photo credit: drehkopp, Pixabay

In your prayers, please remember: Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, David Woodley, Ann Furlong and all the sick and housebound of our churches.



DEATH/FUNERAL NOTICE

Phyllis Green RIP ... Requiem Mass @10:30am, January 8th, Wallingford



Thank You for Supporting Us

Thank you to all who have bought Christmas cards from the Children's Liturgy Group. We have raised a total of £208 for Issac and Nathaniel Kershaw's trip to Uganda. Thank you all and if you still wish to purchase our cards, please remember to bring cash with you. The cards are still available at both churches. Thank you.



Parish Office opening hours for Christmas & New Year

The parish office will be closed from Wednesday 25th December 2024 to Wednesday 2nd January 2025. It will reopen on Thursday 3rd January 2025. This is the last issue of the newsletter for 2024. The next newsletter will be out on the 8th January 2025. Thank you to all parishioners for your continual support and assistance this year. We wish you all a Merry Christmas. We will look forward to welcoming and serving you in the new year.



Repair Works at English Martyrs Church

Please be informed that some inspection and repair works would be carried out at the interior of English Martyrs Didcot from 6th to 8th January. For safety reasons, there will be no activities in the church area of English Martyrs Didcot during this period of time, including weekday masses, worships and prayers. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused.

Ride and Stride 2024

You will recall many of you supported, walked, visited churches and circled for the annual Ride+Stride event this September, 2024. This sponsorship raised £1005 of which 50% i.e. £502.50 will be returned to our Parish account of St John, The Evangelist Wallingford. While in Didcot, £376.95 was raised, of which £188.48. will be returned to The English Martrys, Didcot. This is to express our deep appreciation to Susan Hunt, Raymond & Lilandia Eaton, Douglas Henderson who spearheaded these activities. We say thank you to all who sponsored, walked, circled and visited churches. Merry Christmas to you all.



BBC Radio 4 Christmas Eve 2024 23:30

The traditional Radio 4 Christmas Eve celebration of Midnight Mass comes live from Leeds Cathedral this year. Christmas begins with a joyous celebration of the Mass of the Nativity. The Bishop of Leeds, Marcus Stock, leads the service as the Catholic Church begins a Holy Year of Jubilee under the spiritual theme of 'Pilgrims of Hope'. With Traditional carols, hymns and Mozart's Missa Brevis in C sung by Leeds Cathedral Choir.' Conducted by Thomas Leech and Elizabeth Leather with William Campbell on the Organ.



The Gift Of Time or Phone Call

For those of us who finished our Christmas shopping in August, it's a time to feel wonderfully smug. It's a time when the more organised amongst us feel that we have done and dusted Christmas and can sit back with our feet up. But Christmas isn't just a time for giving presents, but for the giving of ourselves and of our own precious time. Take time to make a phone call, help an elderly neighbour with their shopping, pay a visit or invite someone you know to be alone over for a Christmas drink. Do you know where your goddaughter, godson at baptism or those you sponsored at any of the sacraments is? Do you know what impact a call to remind them about your role and faith could make?



Christmas Gift To Our Priest

Thank You all, our parishioners who have supported our churches and our clergy financially and emotionally. The year is coming to an end and it has been a wonderful year. Without your kind help, support and prayers, this would have not been possible. The digital plate at the entrance of the Church has a new feature added for giving. If you wish to support our priest with financial donation during this Christmas, kindly use the digital plate if you have no cash on you. This is a setup to ensure everyone has a chance to give. Thank you for all you do.



New Sunday Missals for Sale

If you want to get a copy of the New Sunday Missals, you can do so now. It costs £23 per copy, payable by cash or contactless (with our Dona device) at English Martyrs Didcot and St John's Wallingford. You can buy your Sunday Missals from the Parish Office during office hours (Tuesday to Friday 9:00am-1:00pm). Thank you.



Missing of Sunday Missal for Bible Reading Group

We regret to let you know that the Sunday Missal for the Bible Reading Group has gone missing. This has created a lot of inconvenience to our readers. Please keep an eye out for the missing Sunday Missal, which used to be kept on the table at the foyer with a sign to indicate that it is for Bible Readers use ONLY. If you have taken it home by mistake, please can you return it to the church as soon as possible? Thank you.

Seniors' Lunch Volunteer Recruitment

We are looking for volunteers to help in the cooking and serving of our senior lunches, which is held once a month on a Thursday. If you are interested in cooking or serving hot meals to our senior parishioners, as well as creating a cosy atmosphere for our once-a-month gathering, please come forward to volunteer and contact Ada at the Parish Office to register your interest. Nothing is more rewarding than to share and care for our lovely parishioners. Thank you.



Dona — Contactless for Offerings and Repository Purchases

Our contactless paying devices — Dona at both English Martyrs and St John have been set up for you to make general offerings, Christmas or Easter offerings, purchase of repositories or the New Sunday Missals now. Please feel free to make use of the devices when you make purchases or offering any time when the church is open. You can opt to gift-aid your offerings at the device. You may also leave us a message at the end of your payment. You may contact the Parish Office if you have any questions. Please note that purchases cannot be gift-aided. Thank you.



Pope's World Day of Peace message: 'We are all in debt to God'

Hope has been a constant theme in all of Pope Francis' World Day of Peace messages. This is all the more true in his message for the 58th World Day of Peace, which will be marked on 1 January 2025, as the Church begins the Jubilee of Hope amid an unprecedented combination of challenges facing the world today.

Disarming hearts

The overarching goal of these proposals is the attainment of true and lasting peace in the world, which is not merely the absence of war but a profound transformation of hearts and societies. True peace, the Pope says, is granted by God to hearts that are "disarmed" of selfishness, hostility, and anxiety for the future, replacing them with generosity, forgiveness, and hope for a better world: "May we seek the true peace that is granted to God by hearts disarmed."

"May we seek the true peace that is granted by God to hearts disarmed." Simple acts of kindness and solidarity, he notes, can pave the way for this new world, fostering a deeper sense of fraternity and shared humanity.

Concluding his message, Pope Francis offers the following prayer for peace:

Forgive us our trespasses, Lord, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

In this cycle of forgiveness, grant us your peace, the peace that you alone can give

to those who let themselves be disarmed in heart, to those who choose in hope to forgive the debts of their brothers and sisters, to those who are unafraid to confess their debt to you, and to those who do not close their ears to the cry of the poor. [Excerpt from: The Catholic Church Bishops Conference of England and Wales]



Jubilee of Hope: Holy Door Opens on 24th December

Only a few days remain until the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, marking the beginning of the Holy Year 2025. The Jubilee offers a special moment for plenary indulgence, conversion, and grace to rekindle hope in the daily journey of life and the proclamation of the Gospel. Follow the opening of the Holy Door on December 24 at 7:00 PM (Rome time) and all events of the Holy Year 2025 with Vatican News and Vatican Radio via our YouTube channel or Facebook Live. "Hope does not disappoint." Source: vaticannews.va

