



OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

‘Stay with us, Lord, on our journey’

Phone/Fax: 0161 773 2324

Parish web page:
www.ourladyofgrace.co.uk

Parish Email:
john.allen@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

Diocesan web page:
www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD 10 January 2021

HOLY MASS THIS WEEK

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| SUNDAY | First Mass of Sunday is 7pm Saturday. Sunday morning 9.00 & 11.00 am |
| MONDAY | 12 noon |
| TUESDAY | 12 noon (St Aelred of Rievaulx) |
| WEDNESDAY | 12 noon (St Hilary) |
| THURSDAY | 12 noon |
| FRIDAY | 12 noon |
| SATURDAY | 12 noon |

The church is open every day

Monday to Saturday from 11.45 am to 1.00 pm
Sundays from 8.45 am to 10.00 am, 10.45 am to 12 noon.

My dear Parishioners and Friends,

It hasn't been the start to the new year that we wished, has it? The Covid figures have shot up and we have been locked down.

Keeping to all the restrictions isn't easy, and I feel for families and individuals who are struggling at this time. Perhaps something **Pope Francis** said last Wednesday, the feast of the Epiphany, may help.

He was speaking about the prophet Isaiah, who encouraged the people of Israel to "lift up" their eyes and look around, despite their problems.

This prophetic call to "look around" does not mean ignoring difficulties and troubles, much less denying

reality. Rather, "it is a matter of viewing problems and anxieties in a new way, knowing that God is aware of our troubles, attentive to our prayers, and not indifferent to the tears we shed."

This is an invitation to trust continually in God, which in turn leads to "filial gratitude," the Pope said. "When we lift our eyes to God, our problems do not go away, but we feel certain that the Lord grants us the strength to deal with them."

It's good that our churches are still open for Holy Mass each day. Churches have been shown to be among the safest places where people gather. It gives me a chance to offer gratitude once again to the Welcomers who give generously of their time to ensure that Our Lady of Grace church remains open.

Weekday Masses finish by 12.30 pm so if you are cautious about being present with others you might still like to come for a quiet prayer some time between 12.30 and 1 o'clock.



Did you watch the opening part of David Attenborough's fascinating new series 'The Perfect Planet'? Why 'Perfect'? Because, as he explains, "There is one planet where every element has fallen into place perfectly – planet earth. From volcanoes to weather systems, ocean currents to the heat of the sun, these forces allowed life on earth to flourish."

It wasn't of course only *these* forces that brought about living things. The late Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks put it beautifully when he wrote:

The story told by modern cosmology and Darwinian biology is wondrous almost beyond belief. It tells of a universe astonishingly precisely calibrated for the emergence, first of stars, then of second-, third- and fourth-generation stars, then of the formation of planets, one of which met exactly the conditions for the possibility of life. Then, in a way that still remains utterly mysterious, life emerged ...

How it happened, we will never know for sure. But it suggests a story of almost infinite divine patience consistent with everything we know from the Bible yet on a scale only mystics hitherto imagined.

(From his book, *The Great Partnership*, 2011, where Jonathan Sacks says, 'Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts things together to see what they mean.')

To propose that such a complicated process as life happened by chance is to insult the intelligence. As someone said: "The origin of life is about as good as it gets in terms of scientific 'proof' for the existence of God."



This Sunday is a good day to think about the sacred gift of human life. Today is the **'White Flower' appeal** for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. SPUC does good work across the UK and beyond, in keeping with its four aims:

- 1 To affirm, defend and promote the existence and value of human life from the moment of conception until natural death
- 2 To defend and protect human life generally and in particular, whether born or unborn (although principally

the latter) and wheresoever situate

3 To reassert the principle in the United Nations' "Declaration of the Rights of the Child" (1959) that "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth"

4 To defend, assist and promote the life and welfare of mothers during pregnancy and of their children from the time of conception up to, during and after birth

All loose money in the collecting buckets today will go to SPUC.



Our primary school reopened on Thursday. During the national lockdown the school is open to children of critical workers helping to fight Covid-19 and vulnerable children who need more support. **Mrs Casey, Headteacher** asks for our prayers for our school family during this challenging time.



Today's celebration of **Christ's baptism can remind us of our own baptism**. At Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon Him; at our Baptism the Holy Spirit was given to us. At His baptism Christ was proclaimed the "Beloved Son" of the Father; at our Baptism we became the beloved adopted children of God. At Christ's baptism the heavens were opened; at our Baptism heaven was opened to us. It's a good day to thank God for the gift of faith, and to renew our baptismal promises. Have a good day!

Fr Allen

Fr Dearman's reflections on the Creed -

12 THE LAST THINGS

"I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." Sometimes it seems to us that life is just one thing after another, leading nowhere. But our faith tells us that in God's good time his plan of salvation will come to a glorious climax. All our ups and downs are steps along the road that leads to our resurrection.

And we are not just talking about the end of our earthly life, when our souls will be judged and, God willing, eventually reach the happiness of heaven. This joyful state, which no eye has seen or ear heard, is incomplete without the union of mind and body through which we experience joy in our lives on earth.

When the great Day of the Lord comes our bodies will rise again, glorified much as the body of Jesus was glorified after his Resurrection. Only then can we experience the total joy of body and soul for which God destined us when he created us.

"Amen!" We end most of our prayers with this word, and we should end our Creed with a resounding Amen which expresses our joy and gratitude for the great gift of Faith.

AMEN!