



*Parish of Our Lady Help of Christians &
St Lawrence*

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Diocese of Northampton

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26th December 2021	<i>The Season of Christmas</i> FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY	
First Reading	Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6. 12-14 <i>He who fears the Lord respects his parents</i>	
Responsorial Psalm	O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways!	
Second Reading	St Paul to the Colossians 3:12-21 <i>Family life in the Lord</i>	
Gospel Acclamation	Alleluia, alleluia! May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts; let the message of Christ find a home with you. Alleluia!	
Gospel	Luke 2:41-52 <i>Jesus is found by his parents sitting among the doctors</i>	
Sunday 26th December + – THE HOLY FAMILY <i>The Feast of St Stephen is not observed</i>	10.30am	Mass – (For the Parish)
Monday 27th December ST JOHN, Apostle & Evangelist - Feast	10.00am	Mass (Gwen Adshead Int)
Tuesday 28th December THE HOLY INNOCENTS, Martyrs - Feast	10.00am	Mass (Thelma van Reyk)
Wednesday 29th December ST THOMAS BECKETT, Bishop & Martyr – Feast Secondary Patron of the Diocese & the Cathedral – Patron of English Pastoral Clergy		No Parish Mass today
Thursday 30th December <i>Sixth Day of Christmas Octave</i>	9.15am 10.00am	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Mass (Eileen & Brian Barrett Int)
Friday 31st December <i>Seventh Day of Christmas Octave</i>	9.15am 10.00am	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Mass (Adrian & Bernadette Int)
Saturday 1st January MARY, MOTHER OF GOD - Solemnity	10.00am 10.30am	Mass (Tony & Joan Ockenden RIP) Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
<i>Second Sunday After Christmas</i>		
Saturday 1st January +	6.30pm	Mass – (For the Parish)
Sunday 2nd January +	10.30am	Mass – ()



As we are all very aware, the threat of the Covid Pandemic remains ever present in our communities – this is particularly so with the Omicron variant. In the past few days, the Government has re-introduced restrictions to protect us from catching the virus and further restrictions are expected to be announced soon. For now, it is most important that we continue to follow the regulations:

- **We must wear a face covering in all places of worship unless we are clinically unable to do so.**
- **For the benefit of the NHS 'Track & Trace' we must continue to keep records of those attending Mass. This is done when you book your place with Denise & the Stewards confirm your attendance.**
- **Finally, in order to protect one another, it is most important that you sit in the seat allocated to you by Denise when you book your place**



As is customary, Christmas is the time for giving something to Father David to show our appreciation for everything he has done for our parish, particularly during these difficult times. It can be done in several ways; planned giving envelopes; standing order with a reference of Fr David; plain envelope clearly marked 'Fr David Christmas Offering' or by using the 'Digital Collection Plate' (Card Reader). If by cheque please make payable to **Our Lady Help of Christians**.



CAFOD is combining efforts with the DEC to launch the Afghanistan Crisis Appeal. In Afghanistan, 8 million people are on the brink of famine because of drought, collapsing economy, food shortages, conflict, and COVID. CAFOD is supporting sister Caritas agencies to reach communities most in need with food, clean water, and fuel. During this Christmas Season when we open ourselves to the needs of others, let's do all that we can to save lives. You can donate on the CAFOD website: <https://cafod.org.uk/>



ST THOMAS BECKETT was born in London in 1118. He was a cleric of the Church of Canterbury and became Chancellor of the kingdom and then in 1162 was chosen to be Archbishop. He strenuously defended the rights of the Church against King Henry II and he was exiled to France for six years. On his return to his country, he again had to bear many trials and finally, in 1170, following the infamous trial in Northampton, he was murdered by the king's followers in Canterbury Cathedral itself. **St Thomas Beckett is the Secondary Patron of the Diocese and so we especially pray today for Bishop David, Bishop Emeritus Peter, the Priests, Deacons, Religious and people of our Diocese & Parish**

From Fr David's desk.... *Mary, Mother of God*



On New Year's Day, the eighth day after Christmas, we celebrate a beautiful aspect of our Faith: Mary as Mother of God. Pope St John Paul II dedicated a whole cycle of teachings to reflecting on Mary. On 27th November 1996, he reflected on *Mary, Mother of God*.

The contemplation of the mystery of the Saviour's birth has led Christian people not only to invoke the Blessed Virgin as the Mother of Jesus, but also to recognize her as Mother of God. This truth was already confirmed and perceived as belonging to the Church's heritage of faith from the early centuries of the Christian era, until it was solemnly proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

In the first Christian community, as the disciples became more aware that Jesus is the Son of God, it became ever clearer that Mary is the Theotókos, the Mother of God. This is a title which does not appear explicitly in the Gospel texts, but in them the "Mother of Jesus" is mentioned and it is affirmed that Jesus is God (Jn 20:28; cf. 5:18; 10:30, 33). Mary is in any case presented as the Mother of Emmanuel, which means "God with us" (cf. Mt 1:22-23).

Already in the third century, as can be deduced from an ancient written witness, the Christians of Egypt addressed this prayer to Mary: "We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God: despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all evil, O glorious and blessed Virgin" (from the Liturgy of the Hours). The expression Theotókos appears explicitly for the first time in this ancient witness.

In proclaiming Mary "Mother of God", the Church in a single phrase professes her belief regarding the Son and the Mother. This union was already seen at the Council of Ephesus; in defining Mary's divine motherhood, the Fathers intended to emphasize their belief in the divinity of Christ. Despite ancient and recent objections about the appropriateness of recognizing Mary by this title, Christians of all times, by correctly interpreting the meaning of this motherhood, have made it a privileged expression of their faith in the divinity of Christ and their love for the Blessed Virgin.

On the one hand, the Church recognizes the Theotókos as guaranteeing the reality of the Incarnation because—as St Augustine says—"if the Mother were fictitious, the flesh would also be fictitious ... and the scars of the Resurrection". On the other hand, she also contemplates with wonder and celebrates with veneration the immense greatness conferred on Mary by the One who wanted to be her Son. The expression "Mother of God" refers to the Word of God, who in the Incarnation assumed the lowliness of the human condition in order to raise man to divine sonship. But in the light of the sublime dignity conferred on the Virgin of Nazareth, this title also proclaims the nobility of woman and her loftiest vocation. God in fact treats Mary as a free and responsible person and does not bring about the Incarnation of his Son until after he has obtained her consent.

Following the example of the ancient Christians of Egypt, let the faithful entrust themselves to her who, being the Mother of God, can obtain from her divine Son the grace of deliverance from evil and of eternal salvation."

May Our Lady, Help of Christians, Our Lady Mother of God, St Joseph, St Lawrence, St Edmund, St Rita, St John, The Holy Innocents, St Thomas Beckett, pray for us all.

With our love and prayers,

Fr David and Deacon Peter

Fr David, Fr Brian, Fr John, Deacon Peter would like to thank you all for your good wishes and offerings this Christmas but especially for the tremendous support that has been given in so many ways throughout this most challenging of years. We all feel very blest to be ministering in this most wonderful of parishes and together wish you, your families and loved ones a very happy and holy New Year