

Granaghan Parish Newsletter

Sunday, 3rd January 2021

Second Sunday of Christmas

As we begin the New Year we ask for the protection of St Joseph on our families.

Prayer to St Joseph

To you O Blessed Joseph, we have recourse in our tribulations, and while imploring the aid of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also. By that love which united you to the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, and by the fatherly affection with which you did embrace the Infant Jesus, we humbly beseech you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased with His Blood and to help us in our necessities, by your powerful intercession.

Protect, O most provident Guardian of the Holy Family, the chosen children of Jesus Christ; ward off from us, O most loving father, all taint of error and corruption; graciously assist us from Heaven, O most powerful protector, in our struggle with the powers of darkness; and as you did once rescue the Child Jesus from imminent peril to His life, so now defend the Holy Church of God from the snares of her enemies and from all adversity.

Shield each one of us with your unceasing patronage that, imitating your example and supported by your aid, we may be enabled to live a good life, die a holy death, and secure everlasting happiness in Heaven.

Amen.

Blessing of the New Year
(from the Family Prayer Book)

In January, the month of darkness and frost – Be with us, Lord
In February, the month of rain, wind and snow – Be with us, Lord
In March, the month of farmers, lambs and new life – Be with us, Lord
In April, the month of swallows, growth and green grass – Be with us, Lord
In May the month of the cuckoo, flowers and summer – Be with us, Lord
In June, the month of examinations, mid-summer and sun – Be with us, Lord
In July, the month of holidays, dry grass and summer's end – Be with us, Lord
In August, the month of harvest, wheat and corn – Be with us, Lord
In September, the month of fruits, schools and St Michael – Be with us, Lord
In October, the month of falling leaves, colour and nuts – Be with us, Lord
In November, the month of the holy souls and saints – Be with us, Lord
In December, the month of the gift, the light and our Emmanuel – Be with us, Lord.

First: Ecclesiasticus / Sirach 24: 1-2, 8-12 - The wisdom of God has pitched her tent among the chosen people.

Psalm: Psalm 147 - The Word was made flesh and lived among us / O praise the Lord Jerusalem / He established peace on your borders / He makes his word known to Jacob

Second: Ephesians 1: 3-6, 15-18 - Before the world was made, God chose us to be his children.

Gospel: John 1: 1-18 - In the beginning was the word ... John came, sent by God as a witness for the light ... no one has even seen God, only the Son who is nearest the Father's heart.

The Deep End - Taking root We talk about having 'roots' as a way of describing our connection to a place or people. Being rooted somewhere means we are part of that place. When we are ready to settle down, to become part of a community, maybe to buy a house or start a family, we talk about 'putting down roots'. It means we are making this place our home. It is a rich metaphor from the plant world. The roots of a tree or plant represent its relationship with the soil it is planted in and the elements around it. The deeper the roots, the more connected a plant is to its environment. It becomes part of the place where it's planted. We use this expression in everyday language too – when an idea 'takes root' in us, it is something that becomes a part of us, inseparable from our very selves.

Today's first reading speaks of the wisdom of God 'taking root in a privileged people'. It describes it another way as 'pitching a tent'. These images offer us a way into understanding the complex language of today's gospel, which talks about God's relationship with us by sending Jesus: 'The Word was made flesh, he lived among us'.

By becoming human, God put down roots not just in our physical world, but in humanity itself. God pitched a tent among us and became one of us. It is a connection that cannot be broken – the roots go too deep. We are in God, and God is in us. This is the mystery we celebrate in this season of Christmas – that in Jesus, God became part of the very world that God created, and part of us: 'He was in the world that had its being through him.' We are indeed a privileged people!

'Christ asks for a home in your soul, where he can be at rest with you, where he can talk easily to you, where you and he, alone together, can laugh and be silent and be delighted with one another.'

Caryll Houselander

The God of surprises on Wednesday we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, but have you ever wondered what the word 'epiphany' actually means? The word comes from the Greek *epiphainen*, which means to 'shine upon' or 'make known'. So we celebrate today the first occasion that Christ made himself known, in this surprising way, when the light of God shone into our world.

An epiphany is often described as an 'Aha' moment. I wonder if the wise men were taken aback at the ordinary scene they encountered when they arrived at the home of Mary and Joseph. After all, they were looking for a king. What they found was simply 'the child with his mother Mary'. What an unexpected way for God to be revealed. Yet the wise men had enough insight to recognise that they were in the presence of something very special. They had followed the light of the star, and found the light of the world. They were so awed that they knelt to praise Jesus, offering lavish treasures as well as their love and adoration. Imagine the light they carried with them after that encounter, as they made the journey home.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus makes himself known to people in the most unexpected of ways. Perhaps we have got used to encountering God only at set times or in set places – at church on a Sunday, or in the sacraments. The events of this past year have taught us to expect the unexpected, and the Church had to get very creative with its mission to carry the light of Christ into the world. Our God is the God of epiphanies. God tends to surprise us with light and presence, if we only follow the star.

'God is not afraid of new things! That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways.'

Pope Francis