

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

What is the Immaculate Conception? It is not about Christ being conceived by the Virgin, nor is it a miraculous conception of Mary herself. Mary was conceived just as we all are. It is of course the conception of Mary, but one which did not entail original sin. Some people think this means Mary's parents conceived her without sex, because sex is dirty. But that's just daft. Sex is not dirty (we are of course talking about marital sex here, the only kind worth having). Mary was conceived as we all are, I said, but without original sin.

If my dad had a million pounds and lost it all, I would inherit nothing. Original sin is like that; it's inheriting the loss of Adam and Eve, and being born into a fallen world, being part of what makes this world fallen. You don't even need to sin to do this; you just have to be born with this deficit of grace - and that's original sin.

Mary was conceived without that deficit. The archangel greets her with *khaire kekharitōmenē*, which we read as 'Hail, full of grace' or 'Rejoice, highly favoured one'. The New Jerusalem Bible notes that it really means something like: 'Rejoice, you-who-have-been-and-remain-filled-with-the-divine-grace'. Mary never shared in our loss. From her beginning, she enjoyed that closeness to God that only he can give.

This unique privilege of Mary, completely unmerited by her, seems to make her a super-human, beyond the reach of us mere mortals. But this is a problem with our perspective. Mary is the complete human being, and we are the defective ones. We are the hollow men, the badly drawn boys, incomplete like the stick figures on the door of a public loo. But Mary is a human being as she ought to be, replete with and completed in grace.

As a song (*One Bright Blue Rose*) by Mary Black puts it,

'She is the perfect creature,/natural in every feature;/and I am the geek with the alchemist's stone [i.e. the Eucharist]'.

Mary's unmerited privilege is a sign of our own destiny as God's children. In our redemption we will be somehow mysteriously freed from our history. We will be able to accept our sins even as God accepts and forgives them. There will be no more sorrow for sin, no more remorse, no more contrition. And we will be thoroughly free, from our very roots. As Mary already is, so shall the whole Church be, as Scripture says, 'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and immaculate' (Ephesians 5.27). That's why we rejoice in the grace God gave Mary, and why all generations will call her blessed. That's why we sing, 'when wicked men blaspheme thee, I'll love and bless thy name!'

Fr Leon, OP

2nd Sunday of Advent

Year A

9 December 2007

The Newsletter of

HOLY CROSS PRIORY CHURCH, LEICESTER

Served by the Dominican Order: website <http://www.torch.op.org>



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Parish Priest, Fr. Tony Rattigan: 252 1501 For home visits: 255 3856

Sunday Masses	This week	Mass Intentions	Next week
7:30pm Vigil	Fr Isidore	For the People	Fr Duncan
8:00am	Fr Euan	Kitty O'Donoghue, RIP	Fr Isidore
9:30am Family	Fr David	Joseph Johnstone, RIP (anniversary)	Fr Fabian
11:00am Solemn	Fr Duncan	Otto Kuby, RIP	Fr Leon
7:00pm	Fr Tony	Juan Diego Kenady Gloria intention	Fr Euan

SUNDAYS IN TERM: MASS FOR STUDENTS AT 5pm (in the Church). The last Mass this term will be today, and the first next term on 13 January

Sunday Evening Services	8 December	Confessions	15 December
5:45 Rosary	Fr Euan	10:30-11:30am	Fr Isidore
6:15 Sung Latin Compline	Fr Isidore	4:00-5:00pm	Fr Fabian
6:40 Benediction	Fr David	7:00-7:20pm	Fr Tony

Entrance Antiphon:	People of Zion, the Lord will come to save all nations, and your hearts will exult to hear his majestic voice.
1st Reading:	Isaiah 11: 1-10
Psalms Response:	In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails. (Ps 71)
2nd Reading:	Romans 15: 4-9
Alleluia:	Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. And all mankind shall see the salvation of God. At 11:00 - I rejoiced when I heard them say: Let us go to God's house.
Gospel:	Matthew 3: 1-12
Communion Antiphon:	Rise up, Jerusalem, stand on the heights, and see the joy that is coming to you from God.

MONEY MATTERS: Last Weekend: Offertory Collection £1069.61; SVP £14.60; St. Martin's Missions £8.50; Holy Souls £5.80; Grenada £3.01.

Last week's collection for poor parishes came to £328.58.

Christmas Flowers. The collection as you leave Mass this Sunday is for the Flower Fund. Help will be very much appreciated on Saturday 22nd December at 10.30am when the decorating of the church for Christmas will begin.

Very many thanks for your continuing generosity.

This week's Feasts		
Monday:	St Augustine Webster, St Eustace White, Bl Thomas Hunt, Bl Thomas Sprott, Bl Richard Yaxley, Bl Thomas Pormont and the Blessed Martyrs of Lincolnshire (<i>optional</i>)	
Tuesday:	St Damasus I, pope (<i>optional</i>)	
Wednesday:	Our Lady of Guadalupe (<i>optional</i>)	
Thursday:	St Lucy, virgin and martyr	
Friday:	St John of the Cross, priest, religious and doctor	
Saturday:	Advent feria	
Next Sunday's Readings		
Isaiah 35: 1-6, 10	James 5: 7-10	Matthew 11: 2-11

COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS. Do you know of someone who used to belong to the Catholic church and doesn't any more? Chances are you do. You might like to give them one of the Come Home for Christmas leaflets you'll find by the entrances. It's an excellent leaflet, realistic, warm and encouraging. It may do someone in your life a power of good.

Short Advent Talks at Holy Cross - "The Origins of Christmastide". These talks take place on Fridays after the 10:00 and 12:40 Masses. On Friday, 14 December, Fr Fabian will speak on 'St Nicholas' Christmas'. We hope these talks will help you to prepare for the birth of our Saviour.

International Young Leaders Network. There will be a training session held at Blackfriars, Oxford, in July 2008. See noticeboard.



This year's Service of Lessons and Carols will take place on Wednesday 19 December at 7:30pm. Forget late night shopping for the evening: come and prepare for the joyous season ahead! There will be plenty of opportunity to sing carols, interspersed with readings and motets. Parking space will be available in the gated car park just up Wellington Street beyond the Priory. Unfortunately this year we will not be able to offer the usual refreshments afterwards.

"Wish upon a Star Scheme": After its outstanding success for the last two years, this is being repeated this year. The tree carries stars, and each star carries the name of a gift, some cheap, others a little more expensive. You choose a star, or more than one if you wish, buy and wrap the gift(s) named and return it (them) to the church with the stars attached. Your star gifts will go to someone in need, and arrangements will be made to deliver them. Presents must be ready by tomorrow, Monday.

Midnight Mass. Fr Tony needs readers, at least four, for midnight Mass. Could readers who plan to come to midnight Mass and would like to read the scriptures please contact Fr Tony (252 1501).

Training for Reading at Mass. A new formation course for both existing and prospective readers. Fr Tony has details of a Saturday event in Leicester in early February which will be the first presentation of the diocese's course for those who read at Mass or would like to become readers. The course will be repeated.

Carol Singing Party - Tuesday 18 December - 7.00pm onwards - Holy Cross Centre. Please join us for an evening of song, stories, poetry and other fun. Feel free to bring friends and family and, if you would like to do so, prepare your own contribution to the entertainment. There is no entrance fee but if you would bring some mince pies or any of your own traditional, Christmas snacks, that would be great. The bar will be open, children are welcome. See you there!

The Leicester Theological Society will meet this week on Friday 14 December when Fr Diarmuid O'Murchú, M.S.C. will speak on "Theology as a Quantum Horizon". Details are on the noticeboard.

St Paul's School Carol Service will be held on Wednesday 12 December at 7pm. There will be a talk by the Chief Executive of the Nottingham Diocesan Catholic Children's Society, followed by mulled wine and mince pies. See pink poster on the noticeboard.

Leicester Royal Infirmary - Carols at Lunchtime in the Jarvis Building on Tuesday 18 December at 1pm. See noticeboard.

Refugee Support invite you to a **Winter Festival Talent Show** at the Guildhall on Saturday 15 December from 12noon to 6pm. Help build on Leicester's proud tradition of welcoming new communities from around the world. See poster on noticeboard, and further information from gill.buttery@mht.co.uk, tel 257 4021 or 07764 710497.

 Services at Holy Cross during the week:
Mass: Mon - Sat, at 10:00am (with sermon) and 12:40pm.
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Wednesday 10:30am - 12:30pm.
with Rosary and simple Benediction at 12:15pm.
 During the winter months the church will be open from 8am each weekday until 3.30pm.
