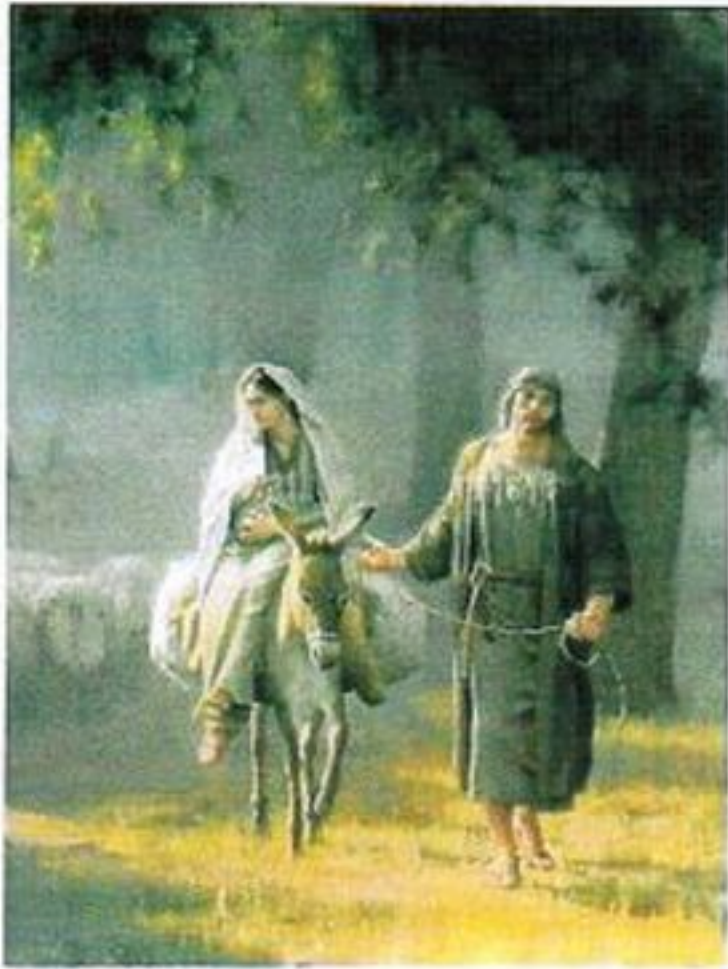


FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

23rd December 2012

St. Mary's, Belford Road, Fort William PH33 6BT Tel. (01397) 702174

www.stmarysfortwilliam.org



Noticeboard

The Mass of Christmas Night	Monday, 10 p.m. (Carols at 9.45 p.m.)
The Mass of Christmas Morning	Tuesday, 10.30
Wednesday (St. Stephen)	Mass at 12 noon
Thursday (St. John)	Mass at 10.15
Friday (The Holy Innocents)	Mass at 10.15
Saturday (Saturday of the Octave)	Mass at 10.15
Sunday (The Holy Family)	Vigil Mass at 6 p.m. Mass at 10.30
Sacrament of Reconciliation	Saturday: 9.45 to 10 a.m. 4 to 4.30 p.m. 5.30 to 5.50 p.m.

This painting by Joseph Brickey invites us to join with Mary and Joseph and the unborn Child as they draw near to Bethlehem.

Our sincere thanks to all who gave support to the **White Fathers** last Sunday. The baskets placed at the back of the church raised £322.29. You are always generous in your support of our missionaries.

One of the places where the White Fathers help implant the Catholic faith was, of course, Uganda. We welcome **Fr Joseph Kasule** of Kampala once again to St. Mary's. This time he comes for a well deserved holiday. He will be here until the 7th January.

We pray for the Faithful Departed. We remember especially **Georgia Thomson** who was buried from St. Mary's on Wednesday. May her Saviour lead her safely to her eternal home. We extend our prayer and sympathy to her children William, Christine and Jacqueline, to her brother John Harkins, and all the family. May the God who gave us his beloved Son be their comfort, light and hope. We pray also for those whose anniversaries are about this time: **Jack Cronin, Mary MacDonald, Thomas MacLean, Hugh MacNeil, Anthony Adams, Angus Ogilvy, Charles McLaughlin, Jan Wegner, Alex MacDonald, Ritu McLaughlin, Gerald Mulrooney, Margaret Wardrop and Campbell Chisholm.** May the Son of God welcome them into eternal peace.

We thank you most sincerely for the cards and gifts delivered to the clergy in the Chapel House. Every Christmas, so many of you show a thoughtful kindness that is more than we deserve. God bless you all, especially when Christmas Day arrives. The above painting is your Christmas card!

Many charities write to parishes before Christmas asking for help. They know that practicing Christians are among the most generous in their support. This Christmas we will help the two whose appeals came first: **Aid to the Church in Need** and **Water Aid**. There will be a special collection at our Christmas Masses to be shared equally by these two well respected charities. Christmas without charity is like the Crib without the Child.

We need four readers for the Christmas Masses! Please contact Fr. MacKinnon immediately if you are able to help out.

The Blessing of the Crib, the Tree and the Children will take place after the 10.30 Mass this Sunday. This is always a very special service. It is also the only time when carols are sung before Christmas Night!

Holy Communion will be taken to the housebound on Thursday and Friday of this week. Please let them know.

A happy Christmas break to our teachers, staff and pupils! Children, please note that Santa pays special attention to behaviour during school holidays! He's already thinking of *next* Christmas.

Preparing for the Prince of Peace

"The wolf lives with the lamb."

An Advent Reflection



In the film "Dances with Wolves" Kevin Costner befriends a wolf which he names "Two Socks". It is very moving to watch this bond develop. The film reflects something of the Native Americans' respect for the wolf, for they were hunters who did not keep domestic stock. They would not see the wolf as did shepherds in other cultures, including that of ancient Israel. The sling which felled Goliath was primarily the young David's weapon against predatory animals that threatened his flock and these included the wolf.



Given this ancient enmity, Isaiah's vision of the wolf living with the lamb is all the more remarkable. It comes from Isaiah 11:1-10, one of the most beautiful of all our Advent readings. The far-seeing prophet is illustrating the peace of the Messianic Age, a peace that fills all of creation. The innocence of Eden is restored, and all because of the one who will be born of the line of David.

There is one creature that has to make peace among his own kind. The Roman playwright Plautus once described him as '*Homo homini lupus*': 'Man the wolf to man'. Georges Rouault, that most Catholic of the great 20th century artists, took Plautus' phrase as the title of one of his post-war etchings. It was part of his famous "Miserere" series. It would perhaps be upsetting to see it reproduced in this pre-Christmas bulletin. Instead here is a painting based on Isaiah by Karen King, herself a devout Christian.



Potpourri

Joy is not the absence of suffering. It is the presence of God.
(Robert Schuller)

Dear God, Help my unbelief. When I'm in pain, I forget that you care about me. I forget that you have helped me through my trials. I forget that you hold me in your arms to keep me safe. I forget that you are feeling my pain with me. I forget that you love me, I forget that I am important to you. Show me your presence - let me feel your enveloping love. Heal my hurting soul. Thank you for staying with me even in my unbelief. (Timothy Dailey)

What loneliness is more lonely than distrust? (T. S. Eliot)

We consider Christmas as the encounter, the great encounter, the historical encounter, the decisive encounter, between God and mankind. He who has faith knows this truly; let him rejoice.
(Pope Paul VI)

Christmas in Bethlehem. The ancient dream: a cold, clear night made brilliant by a glorious star, the smell of incense, shepherds and wise men falling to their knees in adoration of the sweet baby, the incarnation of perfect love. (Lucinda Franks)

Pets, like their owners, tend to expand a little over the Christmas period. (Frances Wright)

The awkward moment when Santa accidentally leaves the price tag on your present. (Eddy Sims)

Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall. (Larry Wilde)

As long as we know in our hearts what Christmas ought to be, Christmas is. (Eric Sevareid)

The simple shepherds heard the voice of an angel and found their lamb; the wise men saw the light of a star and found their wisdom. (Fulton Sheen)

Mankind is a great, an immense family. This is proved by what we feel in our hearts at Christmas. (Pope John XXIII)

Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: "Peace on Earth", "Goodwill to Men", and "Batteries not Included". (Anon)

In the old days, it was not called the Holiday Season; the Christians called it 'Christmas' and went to church; the Jews called it 'Hanukkah' and went to synagogue; the atheists went to parties and drank. People passing each other on the street would say 'Merry Christmas!' or 'Happy Hanukkah!' or (to the atheists) 'Look out for the wall!' (Dave Barry, American columnist)

My first copies of Treasure Island and Huckleberry Finn still have some blue-spruce needles scattered in the pages. They smell of Christmas still. (Charlton Heston)

Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home.
(G.K. Chesterton)

God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.
(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)