

## Chaplaincy Newsletter January 2019

### A Christmas Prayer

Loving God, help us remember the birth of Jesus,  
that we may share in the song of the angels,  
the gladness of the shepherds,  
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world.  
Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings,  
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children,  
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts,  
forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

-- Robert Louis Stevenson

I hope you had a happy Christmas and are looking forward with hope to the New Year. Before the year begins can I just say how much I appreciate all you do and what a difference your work makes to the life of the diocese.

### The Year of Prayer

As you are aware the Bishop shared his pastoral guidelines for the Diocese at the beginning of Advent. You are invited to review your work in the light of these guidelines and to take part in the various events organised by the school's department for the Year of Prayer. In order to support the pastoral guidelines, we have a lot going on this Year. Please note the following.



1. **A Day for All Primary Chaplains 23<sup>rd</sup> January at Downend**  
(10.30 - 3pm tea/coffee from 10am)  
Please try to come to this. The Day will look at the work of Missio/Mission Together, consider our response to the Year of Prayer and look at resources for Lent.
  
2. **Secondary chaplains.** Please note the day on **28<sup>th</sup> January** has been **postponed**. I will e mail out separately the new date together with details of our speaker.
  
3. **Prayer Booklet: Help Needed:**  
Some years ago, the Department issued a prayer book for all pupils in our schools. As part of our response to the Year of Prayer and to connect in to our Vocations theme we would like to issue another booklet but this time including the prayers from pupils themselves. We are looking for prayers from all key stages. These are not necessarily asking for things but on the lines of talking to God about themselves, fears, hopes, worries etc. If you pupils would like to contribute I would love to hear from you though it may not be possible to use all of the prayers sent in.
  
4. **The Journey of the Cross:**  
Many thanks to all those schools who have already sent accounts and videos of their day with the cross as it works its way around the Diocese. These will all be on the Chaplaincy area of our website under the heading **Journey of the Cross**. **The cross is now with the Swindon Partnership** and I look forward to reading your stories. **I would be really grateful if someone from the following partnerships could send in their dates, so I can keep track of where the cross is. Newman, Dunstan, Camino.**
  
5. **Creating a Culture of Vocation:**  
Please note there is now a section on our website called Vocations. Here you will find material to use with staff and pupils. In May there will be vocations exhibitions around the diocese. Taking note of comments about the SAT's exams these dates have now changed. There will now be six venues running from Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May through till Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May. We now need to reconfirm the venues, so I will send the dates out as soon as I have them. Please try to bring a group to the exhibition.
  
6. **October – The Month of Mission:** Pope Francis has declared October 2019 to be a special month of mission. These are his words:  
*“In the Child of Bethlehem, God comes to meet us and make us active sharers in the life around us. He offers himself to us, so that we can take him into our arms, lift him and embrace him. So that in him we will not be afraid to take into our arms, raise up and embrace the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned (cf. Mt 25:35-36). “Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ”. In this Child, God invites us to be messengers of hope. He invites us to become sentinels for all those bowed down by the despair born of encountering so many closed doors. In this child, God makes us agents of his hospitality.*

*Moved by the joy of the gift, little Child of Bethlehem, we ask that your crying may shake us from our indifference and open our eyes to those who are suffering. May your tenderness awaken our sensitivity and recognize our call to see you in all those who arrive in our cities, in our histories, in our lives. May your revolutionary tenderness persuade us to feel our call to be agents of the hope and tenderness of our people.”*

In order to enter into the spirit of this month and to celebrate it we will be working with Missio/Mission Together. **The Education Mass has therefore moved from June to 22<sup>nd</sup> October.** The Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Declan in Clifton Cathedral and the Director of Missio plus other guests will be joining us. Further details will be discussed on the chaplaincy day but for now will you please note the change of date and see if you get this put on your school calendar.

## The Liturgical Year

**‘Candlemas Day’ 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019 also celebrates ‘The feast of the Presentation of the Lord’ This year it falls on a Saturday but perhaps you could celebrate it on the Friday.**

Originally, it is thought the feast was celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> February, the 40<sup>th</sup> day after Epiphany (6<sup>th</sup> January), because the date of Christmas was not fixed on 25<sup>th</sup> December. By the last quarter of the fourth century, however, the Church at Rome had begun to celebrate the Nativity on 25<sup>th</sup> December, so the Feast of the Presentation was moved to 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 40 days later.

Because of the words of the canticle ("*a light to the revelation of the Gentiles*"), by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the custom had developed in the West of blessing candles on the Feast of the Presentation. The candles were then lit, and a procession took place through the darkened church while the Canticle of Simeon was sung. Because of this, the feast also became known as Candlemas. Reminding students of the traditional feasts of the church serves to strengthen our links with our past. The story of Anna and Simeon waiting for the promised messiah is a story of faith and hope and worth celebrating. The candles remind us that Jesus is a light for the world and we are called to live in faith and hope and bring that light to others. This also marks the midpoint of winter, halfway between the shortest day and the spring equinox. In pre-Christian days this was known as a festival of lights. It is a feast of hope; free from the commercialism of December 25<sup>th</sup> it also celebrates light in the darkness.

There is an example of a Candlemas Service attached to the end of the Newsletter, but others can be found at:

- <http://www.liturgies.net/Epiphany/Candlemas/rcchildrensliturgy.htm>
- <https://www.ionabooks.com/e-liturgies-prayers/candlemas.html> (please note this is downloadable from the Iona community but has a small cost )
- <https://www.assemblies.org.uk/pri/1613/candlemas>

**Liturgical dates for 2018**

**Please Note: Ash Wednesday this year is 6<sup>th</sup> March and Ascension Day is 30<sup>th</sup> May. Ascension therefore which is a Holy Day of Obligation will fall in the May half-term this year.**

Many thanks for all you do. I hope the New Year is happy and hopefully and your work flourishes.

God Bless

Ann Fowler

*Whole school Collective Worship for Candlemas  
(you may need the slides to One Small Voice This and the music are  
on our website)*

**Beforehand:** Focal area set up with many small candles and enough large candles for every class. The central point could also be a baby doll and if possible there should also be an image of the Presentation of the Child Jesus similar to this one. The small candles should be lit at the start of the assembly but not the large ones.



**Hymn:** (Could be Walk in the Light, Shine Jesus Shine, The Light of Christ anything about the Light of God)

**Leader:**

Today is the feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple. It is also called the feast of Candlemas. As we begin our assembly we remember that God is always with us and his light guides our lives.

*Six pupils now come forward in pairs. As one pupil reads the other lights a candle or more than one so that at the end of these prayers all the large candles are lit*

- Pupil 1&2      We light a candle to say thank you for all the people in our lives who make our lives brighter especially our families and friends  
We thank God and say: **Thank you for the light.**
- Pupil 3&4      We light a candle to say thank you for all the good things we have in our lives that make our lives brighter. Especially for food, clean water to drink and all the things that bring us joy  
We thank God and say: **Thank you for the light.**
- Pupil 5&6      We light a candle to say thank you for Jesus, the Light of the World, who came to show us the way to God our Father.  
We thank God and say: **Thank you for the light**

**Leader:**

We know that we have lots of good things in our lives but throughout the world there are those people not as lucky as we are. Perhaps they experience the darkness of bullying, of hunger, of loneliness, or fear of being hurt.

We bring to mind any part of our own lives that feel dark or lonely.

*(The six pupils or more, according to the number of classes now come forward in pairs or threes Etc. As a pupil reads out a statement 2 or more of the candles are blown out so that by the end of the three prayers all the big candles have been blown out)*

**Pupils:**

- We think of people who have dark and sad times in their lives in different parts of the world because they don't have enough food to eat or clean water to drink.
- We remember those children in Syria and other parts of the world who have dark and sad times because they are forced to leave their homes because of violence or war.
- We remember children in our own country who have dark and said times because they face bullying or feel left out and unhappy.

*(All the large candles are blown out to represent darkness)*

**Leader:**

If everybody tried to live in the way god wanted there would be less darkness in our world.

Before Jesus was born people waited for a Messiah who would save them from the darkness of sin and bring them into the light of love. They knew however that they had to try to do something to bring about the coming of the messiah. So they tried to live in the way God asked. When Jesus was born there were two people in Jerusalem who had waited their whole lives in the hope they would see the messiah. One was Anna and the other Simeon. This is their story:

*(In the Year 4 work for God Matters there is a PowerPoint of images illustrating this story which could be used to support pupils understanding)*

**Narrator:**

Because Jesus was the firstborn, Mary and Joseph brought Him to Jerusalem Centuries before, when all the first-born in Egypt were put to death, God had spared the first-born of the Israelites. That was why the firstborn son was always brought to the temple. The first-born son was "presented" to the Lord. In other words, he was consecrated to the Lord.

The mother would show her baby to the priest so that the priest could bless him. Then the parents would offer a sacrifice. Rich people would offer a lamb; poor people would offer a pair of pigeons or turtle doves.

They entered the temple and offered the usual sacrifice for poor people.

Suddenly an old man entered the temple with great haste. He hurried straight to Mary.

**Simeon:**

I knew this child was special. All my life I had waited for the messiah. Long ago, it seemed to me that God was saying that I would not die until I had seen the Saviour. When I saw this child, I knew that finally light had come to our world.

I said to Mary and Joseph that many would come to love this child and would receive happiness through Him. But there would be many others who would hate him. The child would cause some to fall and others to rise. I knew too that Mary's joy was greater than anyone else's joy. But her *sorrow* would also be greater than anyone else's sorrow. She would suffer intense pain, as if someone had run a sword through her because she would

have to watch her son suffer. As I handed the child back to Mary an old Lady I knew well, Anna came to stand beside me.

**Anna:**

Like Simeon, I too had been waiting for the Messiah all my life. When I saw the child, I saw much more than a child six weeks' old. I saw Jesus the Son of God. God had come into his world. I knew that from now on I would tell everyone I met that the Redeemer had come.

**Leader:**

Anna and Simeon recognised the child when they saw him. We believe that God is present in everyone, but do we really act as though we believe this? Do we treat people as though God is with them?

As we listen to this music let's think about how well we treat others?

*(Music/slides 'One small voice')*

**Leader:**

**We pray now that we will always try to recognise God in the people around us and treat them in the right way**

**Pupils:**

We pray now for children who need our help and ask us to be their friends. May we also be inspired by the courage and bravery of many children who live in poverty and hardship, and learn from them how to be strong when we have to face doing hard things.

**Pupil:**

- Lord help us to pray for children who live in countries where there is war. May all children live in peace. Lord in your mercy

**Response: Hear our prayer**

- Lord help us to help children who lack enough food to eat. Help us to be generous with all we have. Lord in your mercy

**Response: Hear our Prayer**

- Lord help us to share friendship with all children and never leave anyone out because they are different from us. Lord in your mercy

**Response: Hear our Prayer**

- Help us Lord not to ignore Children who are lonely or unhappy but always to try and be their friend. Lord in your mercy

**Response: Hear our Prayer**

- Lord help us always to treat people as you want us to. Never to bully or to treat people unkindly. Lord in your mercy

**Response: Hear our Prayer**

**Leader:**

We can all make our world a place of light or darkness. The choice is always ours. Let's pray that we will all try to recognise Jesus in the people around us and take the light back with us to our classrooms as a reminder of the way we want our world and our school to be- a place of light, hope and joy.

As we go on the journey out of this reflection back to class let us sing Christ be Our Light.

**(One child from each class comes forward to collect a large candle, if health and safety permit it should be lit, and then lead their class back to their classrooms with other pupils following the light)**