

Inspire

ST JAMES & ST BONIFACE,
MID DEVON PARISH,
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THE FIRST WEEK OF CHRISTMAS

The Sunday that follows Christmas is always the celebration of the **Holy Family**. There are wonderful readings from the First Book of Samuel, and the First Letter of John. The gospel is the story of the teen aged Jesus teaching in the temple while his parents could not find him. Jesus goes back home with his family. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favour before God and man."

Continuing our special feasts in the days after Christmas, Monday is the **Feast of St. John, the Apostle**. Tuesday is the moving **Feast of the Holy Innocents**, remembering the infant martyrs of Herod's jealous rage.

Wednesday is the **feast of St Thomas Becket**. We have the story of the Purification in the temple and the powerful words of Simeon about Jesus and about Mary. Thursday, **the Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas**, is the story from Luke's Gospel of Joseph and Mary meeting the prophetess, Anna in the Temple who gives thanks to God for the child, Jesus "to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem."

Friday is the **Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas**. The Gospel is the beginning of **John's Gospel**. "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Saturday, New Year's Day is the **Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God**. In addition, it is a celebration of **World Day of Prayer for Peace**.

DAILY PRAYER THIS WEEK

During our preparation for Christmas we were asking the Lord to open our hearts, to let us wait with patient trust, and to come to us. Last week we experienced joy and the mixed challenges of Christmas. This week we can have ordinary conversations with our God who came to be with us.

In the silence of this moment, look down at the Christ child in your arms, and look with love at the one who has transformed your world.

Do not say a word, just look and love. Listen to his breathing life out into the world. This breath is for you. It uplifts and enlightens.

Now feel in your heart the joy of heaven, hear the song of glory in your soul, for this child has brought it to you.

Be at peace as you cradle this precious child in your arms. It is his peace that you are receiving, a peace beyond all human understanding.

As you look at the face of this child....listen....God has entrusted his last, deepest, and most beautiful word to the world, in the Word made flesh. Listen to the words that come into your mind.....

I love you world, man and woman. I am there. I am with you. I am your life. I am your time. I weep your tears. I am your joy.

Do not be afraid. When you do not know how to go any further, I am with you.

I am in your anguish, because I suffered it myself. I am in your need and your death, because today I began to live and to die with you.

I am your life. I promise you: for you, too, life is waiting. For you, too, the gates of heaven will open. Karl Rahner

In the days to come, we will begin again to love the Christ child in others as we love Christ in the poor, in the ill, in those who grieve, in those who seek his face. But in the silence of this moment, we look down at the Christ child and listen.

SIGNPOST

The route we have just travelled may have been arduous, interesting; indeed some may have suffered from prayer indigestion depending how many prayers used.

Now let us move onto the new route, which will become our "regular exercise" on our journey, if it isn't already! Here is the course setting for the next step. . . . "The Word of the Lord is living and active; it probes the thoughts and motives of our heart." ^{Hebrews 4[12]}.

This of course means increasing our ability to listen . . . *To recognise God's voice we need to know him, his character and his ways, and spend time in his company. First and foremost, this means immersing ourselves in Scripture.*

There are times when we hear and know that the inner voice which speaks is that of the Father, but we are only disposed to recognise his voice on those occasions because we have been trained to hear it daily in his word. ^{Sister Margaret Magdalen CSMV}

It is the person whose 'delight is in the law of the Lord' and who 'meditates day and night' on it who will be blessed. ^{Psalms 1[2]} *It is by constant feeding upon Scripture that we become mature, training ourselves 'to distinguish good from evil'.* ^{Hebrews 5[14]}

It is as we stay close to God, reading and meditating on his word, letting it soak into every fibre of our being, that we get to know his character and his ways. ^{From Anne Long's book...Listening DLT 1990}

WISDOM FAITH AND TWINS

Our wisdom is based not on theory but on faith. I want to tell you a little story that illustrates this.

This is a story about identical twin girls, Amy and Anne. The twins, Amy and Anne, were about one month away from their birth.

Life was very pleasant for the twins. There was a constant source of food for each of them, even if sometimes it was a little spicier than they wanted. Their home was warm and comfortable.

It seemed to move around a lot, but they were in lovely velvety soft water, so they didn't mind it. They slept and played. One of their favourite games was kickboxing.

One day, they got into an argument. Amy said that it she was sure looking forward to the day when she could see the Mommy face to face.

Anne said, "*How do you know there is a Mommy*"?

Amy said, "*Well of course there is a Mommy, look at how wonderful our life is. We couldn't have this if there was not Mommy*".

Anne said, "*Well, if there is a Mommy, show her to me. If I can't see the Mommy, I don't believe there is a Mommy*".

Amy couldn't show Anne the Mommy, but she could feel her presence and her love. The discussion and argument went on for about a month.

Amy used to say to Anne, "*You have to believe, you have to trust. There is more to life than meets the eye*".

And Anne would respond, "*Stop being so simple, so naive. Use your mind and put your trust only in that which your mind can discover*".

Then one day their world became quite unsettled. The walls started squeezing them into a small space. Amy cried out, "*Mommy I know you are out there. I need you now*". Anne just cried and cried. She was at a total loss trying to understand what was happening. Her mind couldn't explain it. She was full of fear. Finally she called out, "*Mommy, I hope you exist because I am afraid and need someone to calm my fear*".

And the twins were born.

And after the initial shock of it all, they both felt the warmth and the love they had felt in their former home. And Anne realized that Amy was right. There is a Mommy and the warmth and love she felt before and feels now was the very presence of the Mommy.