



ST. BONIFACE



Bringing Christ to the people and people to Christ

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December 31, 2023 – THE HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY & JOSEPH

Our True Home: Scott Hahn Reflects on the Feast of the Holy Family: Why did Jesus choose to become a baby born of a mother and father and to spend all but His last years living in an ordinary human family? In part, to reveal God's plan to make all people live as one "holy family" in His Church (see 2 Corinthians 6:16–18). In the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, God reveals our true home. We are to live as His children, "chosen ones, holy and beloved," as the First Reading puts it. The family advice we hear in today's readings—for mothers, fathers, and children—is all solid and practical. Happy homes are the fruit of our faithfulness to the Lord, we sing in today's Psalm. But the Liturgy is inviting us to see more, to see how, through our family obligations and relationships, our families become heralds of the family of God that He wants to create on earth. Jesus shows us this in today's Gospel. His obedience to His earthly parents flows directly from His obedience to the will of His heavenly Father. Joseph and Mary aren't identified by name, but three times are called His "parents" and are referred to separately as His "mother" and "father." The emphasis is all on their familial ties to Jesus. But these ties are emphasized only so that Jesus, in the first words He speaks in Luke's Gospel, can point us beyond that earthly relationship to the Fatherhood of God. In what Jesus calls "My Father's house," every family finds its true meaning and purpose (see Ephesians 3:15). The Temple we read about in the Gospel today is God's house, His dwelling (see Luke 19:46). But it's also an image of the family of God, the Church (see Ephesians 2:19–22; Hebrews 3:3–6; 10:21). In our families we're to build up this household, this family, this living temple of God until He reveals His new dwelling among us and says of every person: "I shall be his God and he will be My son" (see Revelation 21:3, 7).

Sunday 31 December, we rejoice to keep the Feast of the Holy Family. It is also our annual diocesan Day of Prayer for those in the ministry of Safeguarding. It is a day when we pray for children and vulnerable adults, for the victims of abuse and for all who work in the ministry of safeguarding. Just as Mary and Joseph created a safe home-environment for Jesus, so too on this day, let us offer the Rosary and pray that the Church in all her contexts will be a safe haven for our children and for the vulnerable. Let us thank God too for the work of our diocesan Head of Safeguarding, Ruth Attfield, and her team, and for our Safeguarding Commission and its members under the chairmanship of Bernard Davis OBE. Above all we pray for all those across the Diocese who volunteer and serve so generously in our parishes as safeguarding representatives.

Volunteers Needed for our Safeguarding Team – If you would like to be actively involved in making sure that St Boniface always remains a safe haven for our children and for the vulnerable, please consider joining our Safeguarding Team. For more information, please contact our Safeguarding Officer Angela Braga: safeguarding@st-boniface.org.uk

The Holy Family and Our Families. The feast of the Holy Family makes us reflect on the beauty and dignity of family life. This most blessed family serves as a model for all families for all time. Although the hidden life of Christ is not fully revealed to us in Sacred Scripture, these years of Jesus with Mary and Joseph do show us the importance of His daily life in the ordinary time of family life. It is in Nazareth where the school of the Gospel begins. It is here that three important lessons are provided – the lesson of prayer and silence, the lesson of family life and the lesson of work. Pope St John Paul II contributed immensely to helping families understand and appreciate their amazing dignity. Here are just a few things he said about the Holy Family. "To gather round the Bethlehem grotto, contemplating there the Holy Family, enables us to appreciate the gift of family intimacy in a special way, and spurs us to offer human warmth and concrete solidarity in those unfortunately numerous situations which, for various reasons, lack peace, harmony, in a word, lack "family" (Angelus, December 29, 1996). "This Sunday we are celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth, and it is very significant that this year it takes place the day after Christmas and the opening of the Great Jubilee. I would therefore like to extend my special good wishes to families: a merry Christmas and a happy Jubilee Year to you all, families of Rome and of the entire world! The Jubilee that marks the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's birth is yours in a particular way, because it recalls how God chose to enter human history through a family" (Angelus, December 26, 1999). "For every believer, and especially for Christian families, the humble dwelling place in Nazareth is an authentic school of the Gospel. Here we admire, put into practice, the divine plan to make the family an intimate community of life and love; here we learn that every Christian family is called to be a small "domestic church" that must shine with the Gospel virtues. Recollection and prayer, mutual understanding and respect, personal discipline and community asceticism and a spirit of sacrifice, work and solidarity are typical features that make the family of Nazareth a model for every home" (Angelus, December 30, 2001).

The New Year's Day Monday 1 January 2024. Masses are at 11am & 5:30pm (there is no Mass at 10am).

New Year's Resolutions – The Catholic Digest states that losing weight, eating healthier, exercising more regularly, getting more sleep, or quitting a bad habit probably top our New Year's resolution list. But have we thought about making a spiritual resolution? It's great to focus on physical health, but what about our spiritual health? Here are some concrete possibilities. 1) **Begin your day with the Morning Offering.** St Josemaria Escriva wrote about the heroic minute, meaning that once the alarm rings, get up and say a prayer: O Jesus, through the Immaculate *Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, for the salvation of souls, the reparation of sins, the reunion of all Christians, and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father this month. Amen.* 2) **Daily or weekly Rosary.** Many Catholics learned the rosary as a child. Some pray it every day. Others occasionally. And the rest, rarely. The rosary is a great way for us to reflect on the life of Jesus and Mary, and to pray with the scriptures. Not only that, at Fatima, Mary asked us to pray the rosary daily for peace in the world. Maybe 2024 is the year to take the rosary more seriously. If you are new to the rosary, begin with a decade each day, and move your way up. Pray it once a week. Or strive to pray it daily. 3) **Weekly Stations on Fridays.** This allows us to recall Christ's passion and death and be more grateful for what He did to save us. 4) **Pray through a devotional book.** There are many devotional books, filled with meditations that will help us deepen our relationship with God. For example: *Called: Becoming an Everyday Disciple in a Post-Christian World — A Five-Week Guide* by Kevin Cotter (Ave Maria Press, 2018) and *52 Weeks with Saint Faustina: A Year of Grace and Mercy* by Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle (Marian Press, 2019). If you are looking for a Marian meditation book, I recommend my 31 daily devotionals, *A Heart Like Mary's: 31 Daily Meditations to Help You Live and Love as She Does* (Ave Maria Press, 2017). 5) **Read a spiritual book.** There are many books written by Catholic authors available for you to deepen your knowledge of Jesus, Mary, the Church, the saints, and other topics relevant to Christian living. Check out the catalogues for the prominent Catholic publishers such as Twenty-Third Publications, Ave Maria Press, Our Sunday Visitor, Sophia Institute Press, Tan Books, and Ignatius Press. Decide to read one book this year that will benefit your spiritual life. 6) **Read or pray with the Bible.** There are different apps and books that could help you read the entire Bible during 2024. Or maybe choose to read a certain section of the Bible and expand your selection once you completed your goal. Read the Gospels, or the letters of St. Paul, or the prophetic writings. Come to a greater knowledge of the word of God. And while you are at it, you can pray with the Bible, through a process called lectio Divina, in which one reads a passage and spends a few moments meditating on a word or phrase, or engaging one's imagination with the Scripture passage. Through this prayer, God speaks in a deeper way to our souls about the Scripture contemplated.

Epiphany Lunch is on Friday 5 January, 12 noon in our Church Hall with soup, sandwiches & cakes. All are welcome. There is NO healing Mass on this day 5 January.

Just this past week two dear parishioners have passed away. Please pray for the repose of their souls. Catherine Mercer passed away on Christmas morning. Jane Barber passed away on the 28th, right in the middle of the Christmas Octave. Catherine's funeral will be on Friday, 26 January at 1pm. We will let you know when Jane's funeral will be. May God reward them for all the good they did! May they rest in peace!

White Flower Appeal – 13/14 January. Every year hundreds of churches across Britain take part in the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) White Flower Appeal, making it one of their largest and most important educational and fundraising events of the year. Most appeals take place in January. St Boniface will host this appeal on the weekend of 13/14 January. The success of the White Flower Appeal is founded on the compassion and generosity of faithful churchgoers in parishes across the UK. SPUC is grateful for the unapologetic defence of unborn babies and vulnerable people that the teaching of the Catholic Church provides. The name was originally inspired by the work of the White Rose movement, a non-violent, intellectual resistance to the Nazis in Germany at the height of the Second World War. In February 1943 Hans and Sophie Scholl, two of the group's core active members, were caught and arrested. Following interrogation, they were tried by the Gestapo and beheaded along with four others. The White Rose and Sophie Scholl have been the subject of several films retelling the story of their bravery to new generations. The White Rose still serves as an example to us of what can be achieved by standing up for what is right.

Mass Intention Offering – Please be advised that offerings can be made by cash (in an envelope clearly marked "Mass Intention"), or by cheque payable to **CDP Oblates of the Virgin Mary**; or via a bank transfer using the details given here: Payee Name: **CDP Oblates of the Virgin Mary**; Branch Sort Code: **30-80-27**; Account Number: **36062268**; Reference: **Mass Intention**. Or simply give it to the Priest on the day of your Mass requested/attended.

Second Collection is on this Sunday 31 December for St Boniface Building & Maintenance! Please support generously!

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Parish website: www.st-boniface.org.uk

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