



# In Touch

Journeying Together:

Collaboration

Co-operation

Co-Responsibility

Third Sunday of Advent (year B)

16<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> December 2023

No. 1364

Dear Parishioners

I hope that you and your families are well. I send you all my prayers.

As we move into the season of Christmas decorations, carol services and nativity plays many households will be putting up their Christmas crib. This is a tradition which goes back hundreds of years, to St Francis, in 1223. Pope Francis writes about the first crib in these words: *Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire “to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay”. At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked.*

*On 25<sup>th</sup> December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present. This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.*

Pope Francis goes on to meditate on the power of the crib to move us, maybe touching memories from childhood which were filled with a sense of wonder and joy. He writes: *Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God’s tender love: The Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.*

*Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts... God does not abandon us but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His*

*closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering.*

I pray that we will all experience the joy of Christmas through the crib and all that it means for us. Do please remember the Family Vigil Crib mass on 24<sup>th</sup>, and encourage your children to come to play their part as a character in the story. Do bring your friends and neighbours.

I send all best wishes for a very happy Christmas. Fr Paul

### **Prayers**

Please continue to pray for our parishioners Helen Maher, Pamela Bagwell, Helen Sweetman, Jill Carter, Laura Rawlinson, Peter and Antee Greene, Fred Green and Hugh Hurdman.

#### **Please pray for the people of Israel and Palestine.**

*God of peace, who are peace itself  
and whom a spirit of discord cannot grasp, nor a violent mind receive,  
grant that those who are one in heart may persevere in what is good  
and that those in conflict may forget evil and so be healed.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen*

*(Prayer: Roman Missal, p.1361)*

#### **A prayer for Pope Francis**

Please pray for Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, in thanksgiving for all he has done for our Church, and that he may have the strength and courage to complete the task which God has given him.

*Almighty God, look kindly on your servant Pope Francis.*

*You invited him to shepherd your flock. Guide and protect him in his daily work.*

*Inspire him in your ways to embrace Church unity.*

#### **A prayer for Peace and Justice in Ukraine**

*God of peace and justice, who change the hardened heart and break the power of violence,  
we entrust the people of Ukraine to you.*

*Protect them in this time of peril; let them know, not death, but life, not slavery, but freedom*

*You are Father of all; we are brothers and sisters*

*Give us the strength to live that truth in love, choosing peace, not war*

*Amen*

#### **Dear God, our Creator**

*You revealed your love to us and Creation once for all through the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

*By the grace of Your Creator Spirit, teach us to celebrate our faith  
in the Incarnation that took place in Creation.*

*Dear Jesus, Saviour of Creation, we ask that You may be born in us, once again, as we  
seek to cultivate hope for our common home. As Your followers, teach us to care for  
the dignity of all human beings and all Creation, now and in the future.*

*We pray for today's victims of global warming, both human and nonhuman.*

*We pray for more ambition in the energy transition, in this country and globally.*

*We pray for our governments, and especially for those at COP28, to negotiate a global  
and fair phase-out of fossil fuels.*

*And, finally, we pray for the courage to be prophets of our time, calling upon our leaders  
to bear fruits of ecological justice after COP28.*

*Come Emmanuel! Make us ever more hopeful people for a hopeful planet. Let us be  
part of Your light of hope to the world. Amen.*

#### **Lord, The Word who is Life**

*May all the people of our Diocese grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit  
So that through a growth in understanding and courage, and truly open to your call*

*We may bear powerful witness to all around us, for you are Lord for ever and ever*

*Amen*

### Anniversaries

**Please pray for the Souls of** – Ralph Etherton, Anne O'Reilly, Eric Frankton, Fr Jerome Tomlins, Mike Wheeler, Mary Lovell, Ernest Constable, Alan Downs, Fr Ian Condon, Josephine McLoughlin, Alec White, John Hall and Joanna Mackey.

**Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them, may they rest in peace. Amen.**

### **Daily Readings**

Monday – Jer 23:5-8 Matt 1:18-25

Tuesday – Judg 13:2-7, 24-25a Luke 1:5-25

Wednesday – Isa 7:10-14 Luke 1:26-38

Thursday – Songs 2:8-14 or Zeph 3:14-18a Luke 1:39-45

Friday – 1 Sam 1:24-28 Luke 1:46-56

Saturday – Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Luke 1:57-66g

Next Sunday's Readings: **Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year B)**

1st Reading – 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16 2nd Reading – Romans 16:25-27

**Gospel: Luke 1:26-38**

**I am the handmaid of the Lord**



**In Touch will now take a break and will return in 2024!  
Merry Christmas to all, with love and best wishes from the Parish Office Team.**

### *Parish Events*

### **Christmas Timetable**

**This Sunday, 17th December** – Advent Carol Service at 3.30pm. Come and join the monks at Worth Abbey for the ever-popular traditional Carol Service in the compelling and peaceful surrounds of Worth Abbey Church. Experience an hour of carols, readings and wonderful music. An opportunity to reflect on the real meaning of Christmas. Festive refreshments afterwards. Bring you family and friends. Children are most welcome.

**Sunday 24th December** – Family Christmas Vigil, Mass of the Nativity. We invite our Parish families to join us for a Christmas Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve at 3pm. This will be a celebration for families with children of all ages. Children who would enjoy dressing up as nativity figures are encouraged to do so! We also ask that families bring an animal or angel to add to our crib—the children will then be invited to join the entrance procession to the crib and place this object at the altar. These animals and angels will be 'on loan' during the Mass and should be collected after Mass. (No live animal loans please!!) The Mass will begin with carols at 3pm and will conclude no later than 4pm. This Christmas Vigil Mass welcomes all ages and will be family friendly in length, concept and language.

**Sunday 24th December** – Midnight mass starting at 10.30pm for Carols and Organ music to prepare for mass at 11pm. Mass will be followed by Refreshments in the Narthex

**Monday 25th December** – Christmas Day Mass at 10am

**Tuesday 26th December** – Friday 29th December – Mass at 5.30pm

**Saturday 30th December** – Parish Vigil mass at 5pm (Holy Family)

**Sunday 31st December** – Sunday Mass (Holy Family). Followed by refreshments.

**Sunday 31st December** – 09.30am mass. Enrolment into St Stephen's Guild for Kornel Klapczynski and James Cade

**Monday 1st January** – Mother of God. Mass at 5.30pm

### **Christmas break dates for Jr Church**

The final Jr Church class will be this Sunday, 17th December.  
We resume classes on Sunday 7th January 2024.

Please note that the monastic community will be on retreat from  
**Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> December.**

We will, of course, pick up any urgent messages.

But please also note that our system of emails will be disrupted during this time, and possibly also our telephone landlines.

### **Readers Rota**

We owe a big debt of gratitude to Jenny Harrison who has managed this over many years with great care and fidelity. This has now been taken over by Charles McCarthy.

Thank you both very much.

### **House Group Gathering**

All welcome! We have a very informal house group gathering in Balcombe on the last Friday of each month. All Worth parishioners are very welcome to come, socialise, relax, have a drink and some snacks and get to know your community better.

Upcoming date: **29<sup>th</sup> December.**

We gather from 7.30pm.

Please let Charlie Tibble know on 07845956243 if you intend to come the week before and she will send you directions

### **Marriage Preparation**

The next course in the parish will begin on **Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> February** and will be the only course offered by the parish for the year. Would anyone who is planning to get married during 2024, please get in touch.

### **Advent Groups**

One Advent group will meet in Cuckfield on **Mondays at 4:00pm.**

All are most welcome, please contact: [christiegrieve@gmail.com](mailto:christiegrieve@gmail.com) or [christinafitzsimons@icloud.com](mailto:christinafitzsimons@icloud.com) for further details.

### **RCIA**

We have now begun our new course for those who wish to join the Catholic Church, or are considering doing so; and for those who simply wish to find out more about their faith. The course is based on programmes from Sycamore, and free discussion. Any new comers will be most welcome. The group will now meet on Sundays, after mass, at 11 am in St Benedict's, for about one hour. If you would like to join the group, or just come and see if it's right for you, do please get in touch - Geoffrey Chapman (GPC)

[gchapman@worth.org.uk](mailto:gchapman@worth.org.uk) or the parish -

Parish [parish@worth.org.uk](mailto:parish@worth.org.uk); or just come and join the group on the day.

## Worth Pro Earth

West Sussex County Council write: **Recycling and waste prevention this Christmas**

With this being the last edition of our newsletter before Christmas, we would like to take this opportunity to encourage residents to reduce their waste as much as they can this December. Our [website](#) has loads of information on how our team are keeping their waste to a minimum this festive season. Why not check it out for some inspiration?

We appreciate that waste cannot always be avoided which is why we would also like to remind everyone to recycle as much as possible. If you have extra household recycling, check with your local [district and borough council](#) for more information on their excess recycling policy.

Remember that you can also take your soft plastics such as films, wrappers and carrier bags to your local participating supermarkets as part of their soft plastics recycling scheme.

**Prepare for Advent: Download your calendar** <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/advent-calendar>

- Key liturgical dates of Advent and the most important COP events
  - A reflection for each Sunday of Advent
    - A weekly question to reflect on
  - An action to carry out each week of Advent
    - A song to pray at Christmas time

### **Please also see:**

- The Archdiocese of Chicago has this wonderful [Living Laudato Si' Advent Calendar](#) with daily reflections and challenges to help us engage with the Laudato Si' Goals.  
(From Journey to 2030 newsletter)

- Sustainable Christmas ideas: 13 ways to make the festive season greener <https://www.positive.news/lifestyle/sustainable-christmas-ideas-how-to-make-yuletide-greener/>  
(From Positive News newsletter)

### **Tell supermarkets to ban bee-toxic pesticides**

Recent studies have revealed major declines in global pollinator populations, with pesticides named as a key driver. Close to 75% of the world's crops depend on pollinators for sustained production, yield and quality.

The cost of pollinating crops artificially would cost an additional £1.8 billion per year in the UK alone. Given that much of this damage is being done in the name of food production, UK supermarkets have a key role to play in reversing this worrying trend. At the very least, they must take measures to ensure that their global supply chains 'do no harm' to our already-struggling pollinators.

Much of the debate around the impact of pesticides on bees and other pollinators has focused on a class of chemicals known as '**neonicotinoids**' (1 gram is enough to kill **125 million honeybees**). After years of campaigning, the use of four neonicotinoids was recently banned in the EU and the UK and farmers here are no longer permitted to use these chemicals when growing crops (although they can still use other bee-harming pesticides). But neonicotinoids are still used elsewhere in the world. This means that many products on UK supermarket shelves will have been grown in a way which is extremely harmful to bees. **In other words, we are exporting our environmental footprint to countries with weaker standards.** UK supermarkets have huge global footprints and the power to make change. They urgently need to ban bee-toxic pesticides and support growers around the world to adopt more sustainable, non-chemical alternatives.

**Join us in asking Asda, Aldi, Co-op, Iceland, Lidl, M&S, Morrisons, Sainsburys, Tesco and Waitrose to ban bee-toxic pesticides from their UK and global supply chains.**

[Take Action](#)

## *Non-Parish Events*

### **\*\*SAVE THE DATE\*\***

Our popular annual Justice & Peace Assembly, held at The St Philip Howard Centre in Crawley, will take place on **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January** 10am - 1.30pm.  
Further details will be released very shortly.

### **Pilgrimage to Normandy**

Led by Michael Woodward, of the Lay Community of St Benedict, from **12<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2024**.  
Chaplain – Fr Ian Byrne. If you would like more information, please contact the parish office.



### **Retrouvaille: A Programme for Couples Struggling in their Marriages**

**Help Your Marriage** – Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue ... or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. It brings a positive focus, new hope and helps nourish and grow your marriage. Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending and using the tools provided. The programme helps spouses uncover or re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together. It helps them through difficult times whether they are disillusioned or in deep misery. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential information about 'Retrouvaille' or to register for the next programme commencing with a **Virtual weekend on 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2024** or a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on **14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024**, call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443 or email [retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com](mailto:retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com) - or visit [www.retrouvaille.org.uk](http://www.retrouvaille.org.uk)

### **For other regular items, please see the website:**

For readings, see Universalis: [Universalis](#)

Parish Leadership Team: [Parish Leadership Team](#)

Our Facebook page: [Parish Facebook](#)

Children's Junior Church liturgy: [Junior Church](#)

Diocesan Family Materials: [Family Materials](#)

Parish Giving: [My Dona Parish Giving](#)

Please use the QR code for donations to the Parish. Thank you



*Parish Priest: Fr Paul Fleetwood (Mobile: 07764 260216)*

Parish Office Email: [parish@worth.org.uk](mailto:parish@worth.org.uk) Parish Office Tel: 01342 710313 Parish Website: [www.worthabbeyparish.co.uk](http://www.worthabbeyparish.co.uk)

Secretary: Maria Stribbling, available 9.15am-1.15pm Mon-Fri

Night time emergencies only: 01342 710331

Any cheques to be made payable to – Worth Abbey Parish

**In Touch:** If you would like anything to appear in 'In Touch', please contact Maria Stribbling at [parish@worth.org.uk](mailto:parish@worth.org.uk)  
**(by Wednesday 10am)**

**Safe Spaces:** 0300 303 1056 Web: [www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/](http://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/) Email: [safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk)

If you are unable to attend Mass and would like to receive Holy Communion at home, or if you have any prayer intentions, please let Fr Paul know.

## REGULAR EVENTS IN THE PARISH

**Mass Times** - Saturday: 9.00 am (Concelebrated) and 5.00 pm (First Mass of Sunday),  
Sunday: 9.30 am  
Daily Mass: 5.30 pm (Concelebrated), Holy Days of Obligation: 7.30 pm;  
Feast Day: 5.30 pm



**Confessions (Sacrament of Reconciliation)** – In the Church, Sundays 08.45am – 09.15am  
(If anyone cannot come at this time, please make a special appointment with Fr Paul)

**Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** – Every Sunday at 6.30pm in the Church, after vespers and on  
Wednesdays from 2pm–3pm.

**Rosary Group** – Mondays in the Abbey Church after Vespers – 7:10pm until 8:00pm. Please get in touch  
with Rachel Davies: 07801 696354.

**Lectio Divina** – Tuesday evenings at 8pm via Zoom. Please contact Jenny Chapman  
[jenny\\_chapman@sky.com](mailto:jenny_chapman@sky.com) **Lectio Divina is taking a three week break over Advent / Christmas; the next  
Zoom meeting will be on the 9th January 2024. If you would like to join us please contact Jenny Chapman  
by email or speak to her after Mass any weekend.**

**Christian Meditation Group** – 7.00pm in the Unity Room, please contact Richard by email  
[rbrownd1@gmail.com](mailto:rbrownd1@gmail.com) **No December Group**

**Vigil for Vocations** - (1st Friday). After Compline 8.30pm - 9.00pm.

**Bible Study Group** – 11am on Mondays in St Benedict's (Parish Office). Please contact Jenny Chapman.  
[jenny\\_chapman@sky.com](mailto:jenny_chapman@sky.com) **The Bible study group will be taking a two-week break, the last meeting this  
year is next Monday 18th December, and we will meet again on Monday 8th January 2024. Please contact  
Jenny chapman if you think you might like to join the group.**

Worth Abbey Parish is committed to safer recruitment. Arundel and Brighton Diocese and Worth Abbey Parish are committed to safeguarding all children and vulnerable groups at risk within its community. The Diocese aims to embed a culture of safeguarding to prevent abuse and to provide support to individuals who have been hurt by abuse, taking the necessary actions to reduce the likelihood of further harm.

**Our Worth Abbey Parish Safeguarding Reps are Charles and Ann McCarthy**

**Email: [sg1.worth@abdiocese.org.uk](mailto:sg1.worth@abdiocese.org.uk)**