

# PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's,  
Warrington*



## Christmas Vigil Mass

Sunday 24 December 2023

### Introductory Rites

#### Entrance Procession

- 1 Once in royal David's city  
stood a lowly cattle shed,  
where a Mother laid her baby  
in a manger for his bed:  
Mary was that Mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.**
- 2 He came down to earth from heaven,  
who is God and Lord of all,  
and his shelter was a stable  
and his cradle was a stall;  
with the poor, and mean, and lowly,  
lived on earth our Saviour holy.**
- 3 For he is our childhood's pattern,  
day by day like us he grew;  
he was little, weak and helpless,  
tears and smiles like us he knew;  
and he feeleth for our sadness,  
and he shareth in our gladness.**
- 4 And our eyes at last shall see him  
through his own redeeming love,  
for that child so dear and gentle  
is our Lord in heaven above;  
and he leads his children on  
to the place where he is gone.**

*Cecil Frances Alexander (1848)*

#### Greeting & Introduction

*Fr Dave greets everyone present.*

**R. And with your spirit.**

#### Collect

God of endless ages, Father of all goodness,  
we keep vigil for the birth of your Son.  
Count us among the people in whom you delight,  
and by this night's marriage of heaven and earth  
draw all generations into the embrace of your love.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.

**R. Amen.**

### Liturgy of the Word

#### First Reading

*(Isaiah 9: 1-7)*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

The people that walked in darkness  
has seen a great light;  
on those who live in a land of deep shadow  
a light has shone.  
You have made their gladness greater,  
you have made their joy increase;  
they rejoice in your presence  
as men rejoice at harvest time,  
as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils.

For the yoke that was weighing on him,  
the bar across his shoulders,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
these you break as on the day of Midian.

For all the footgear of battle,  
every cloak rolled in blood,  
is burnt,  
and consumed by fire.

For there is a child born for us,  
a son given to us  
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;  
and this is the name they give him:  
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God,  
Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.  
Wide is his dominion  
in a peace that has no end,  
for the throne of David  
and for his royal power,  
which he establishes and makes secure  
in justice and integrity.  
From this time onwards and for ever,  
the jealous love of the Lord of Hosts will do this.

The word of the Lord.

**R. Thanks be to God.**

#### Lighting of the Christmas Candle



#### Carol

- Angels we have heard on high  
sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply  
echo still their joyous strains.

***Gloria, in excelsis Deo!***

***Gloria, in excelsis Deo!***

- 2 Come to Bethlehem and see  
him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee  
th'infant Christ, the new-born King.

*Traditional French Carol (1862)*

### Gospel

*(Luke 2: 1-14)*

The Lord be with you.

**R. And with your spirit.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

**R. Glory to you, O Lord.**

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.



In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace to all who enjoy his favour.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### Homily

### Carol

- 1 **Away in a manger,  
no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus  
laid down his sweet head,  
the stars in the bright sky  
looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus  
asleep on the hay.**
- 2 **The cattle are lowing,  
the baby awakes,**

**but little Lord Jesus  
no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus!  
Look down from the sky,  
and stay by my side  
until morning is nigh.**

- 3 **Be near me, Lord Jesus;  
I ask thee to stay  
close by me for ever,  
and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children  
in thy tender care,  
and fit us for heaven,  
to live with thee there.**

### Blessing of the Crib

God of every nation and people,  
from the very beginning of creation  
you have shown your love.

When our need for a Saviour was great  
you sent your Son to be born of Mary.  
To our lives he brings joy and peace,  
justice, mercy and love.

Bless all who look upon this manger;  
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus,  
and raise up our thoughts to him,  
who is God-with-us and Saviour of all,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

**R. Amen.**

### Bidding Prayers

### Liturgy of the Eucharist



### Preparation of the Gifts

- 1 **O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by.  
Yet, in the dark streets shineth  
the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.**
- 2 **O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to all on earth;  
for Christ is born of Mary;  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.**

- 3 **How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming,  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him still,  
the dear Christ enters in.**

*Phillips Brooks (1868)*

Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

**R. May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.**

#### **Prayer over the Offerings**

Lord,  
accept our gifts on this joyful feast.  
By our communion with your Son,  
may we become more like him  
who joins our lives to yours,  
for he is Lord for ever and ever.

**R. Amen.**

#### **Eucharistic Prayer**

The Lord be with you.

**R. And with your spirit.**

Lift up your hearts.

**R. We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**R. It is right and just.**

*Please join in singing the 'Holy, Holy' repeating each phrase after the cantor.*

*Then, after the consecration:*

**O come let us adore him (x3)  
Christ the Lord.**



#### **The Lord's Prayer**

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
graciously grant peace in our days,  
that, by the help of your mercy,  
we may be always free from sin  
and safe from all distress,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**R. For the kingdom,  
the power and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
who said to your Apostles:  
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;  
look not on our sins,  
but on the faith of your Church,  
and graciously grant her peace and unity  
in accordance with your will.

Who live and reign for ever and ever.

**R. Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**R. And with your spirit.**

#### **Sign of Peace**

*Please exchange the Sign of Peace with those around you in whatever way is most comfortable for you.*

#### **Breaking of the Bread**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,  
grant us peace.

#### **Invitation to Communion**

Behold the Lamb of God,  
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**R. Lord, I am not worthy  
that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

#### **Communion**

*Song: O Holy Night – Placide Cappeau (1808-1877)*



- 1 **Silent night, holy night,  
all is calm, all is bright,  
round yon virgin mother and child;  
holy infant so tender and mild:  
sleep in heavenly peace (x2)**
- 2 **Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds quake at the sight,  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing alleluia:  
Christ, the Saviour is born (x2)**
- 3 **Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from thy holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace:  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth (x2)**

*Franz Xaver Gruber (1818)*

#### **Prayer after Communion**

God our Father,  
we rejoice in the birth of our Saviour.  
May we share his life completely  
by living as he has taught.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**R. Amen.**

## Concluding Rite

### Blessing & Dismissal

The Lord be with you.

**R. And with your spirit.**

May almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**R. Amen.**

Go in the peace and the joy of Christ.

**R. Thanks be to God.**

### Final Hymn

- Hark, the herald angels sing,  
glory to the new-born King;  
peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled;  
joyful all ye nations rise,  
join the triumph of the skies,  
with the angelic host proclaim,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.  
*Hark, the herald angels sing,  
glory to the new-born King.***
- Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of a Virgin's womb!  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
hail the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.**
- Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings  
risen with healing in his wings;  
mild he lays his glory by,  
born that man no more may die,  
born to raise the sons of earth,  
born to give them second birth.**

*Charles Wesley, adapted by George Whitefield and others*



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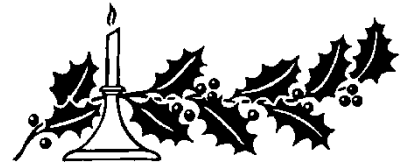
The **Offertory Collection** takes place as you leave church – a basket will be available, or you can use the 'Tap & Go' facility. This collection is the main source of income for the parish. Many thanks for your generosity.

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### Acknowledgements

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## Christmas in Heaven



In all the joy of Christmas, there can be sadness too – especially if we're missing a loved one who has died. The following poem was penned by a mother, Wanda Bencke, whose young daughter died. She imagines her daughter saying:

**I see the countless Christmas Trees  
Around the world below  
With tiny lights, like Heavens stars  
Reflecting in the snow.  
The sight is so spectacular,  
Please wipe away a tear  
For I am spending Christmas  
With Jesus Christ this year.**

**I hear many Christmas songs  
That people hold so dear,  
But the sounds of music can't compare  
With the Christmas Choir up here.  
I have no words to tell you,  
The joy their voices bring;  
For it's beyond description  
To hear an angel sing.**

**I know how much you miss me  
For I feel your breaking heart;  
But through our memories, oh so dear  
We're never far apart.  
I can't tell you of the splendour  
Or the peace that's in this place,  
Can you just imagine Christmas  
With our Saviour face to face?**

**I'll ask him to light your spirit  
As I tell him of your love;  
Then pray for one another  
As you lift your eyes above.  
So let your heart be joyful  
And let your spirit sing  
For I am spending Christmas in heaven  
And I'm walking with the King.**

