

GOSPEL REFLECTION.

As we begin a New Year, we listen today to the beginning of John's Gospel. In the incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God and the Word of God himself, came to share our human nature in order that he might share his divine life. The incarnation is a mystery of love, God's love for us in Christ. If Jesus had come down to earth in all the glory of his divinity, people would have trembled before him. They would not only have accepted him, but they would have fallen down to worship him. But he did not want this. He knew that this kind of submission would never bring us inner peace or happiness. So he came in humility and weakness. He wanted to gain our love so that we would follow him through our own free will. He wanted our freely given love rather than the servile submission of slaves.

This involved a risk. People might not accept him. And this is exactly what happened. St. John says, "He came to his own and his own people did not accept him." But some did accept him and followed him. To these he gave a share in his divine life. He made them children of God.

When we accept God's love we experience our own goodness, and we are able to love God in return. Real love becomes possible between us. In his love for us God made all this possible through the gift of his Son. In Jesus we have a friend who loves us to the extent that he came among us and shared our lives to the full. Not only did he share our lives, but he also shared our death. From his fullness, as from a limitless fountain, all of us have received, and will continue to receive, grace after grace, if we continue our journey of faith. As we begin this New Year, we pray for peace, happiness, love and hope in all our lives. May the coming of God's Word in the person of Jesus bring us such great gifts so that we can become the people God wants us to be.

MASS INTENTIONS.

At present we are running short of Mass Intentions at St. Richard's Church. If you would like a Mass Intention for a loved one, please book it early. Even then it is not always possible for the date you may wish to have, but we will try to celebrate the Mass as near to the date as possible. Also, priority for Funerals obviously must come first, and this may lead to the Mass being cancelled, usually the week before.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK.

Whilst it can be a very sad moment in a family's life, the Sacrament of Anointing is one of the most wonderful sacraments in the Church, when we pray for God's healing and peace on those who are very poorly. Sadly, during the pandemic, it hasn't always been easy to administer this sacrament, due to Covid restrictions. However, if you know of someone who may need the Sacrament of the Sick, please try your best to contact a priest as soon as you can. We are very short of priests in these times and some of us may be isolating, so it won't always be easy to contact one of the priests. Please do not leave it until the last moment of a person's life to call for a priest. The Sacrament of Anointing can be celebrated at any time.

COVID RESTRICTIONS.

We are still living with the Pandemic so please continue to follow the guidelines and keep safe. Face coverings are still to be used in church as they are to be worn indoors everywhere. We must continue to keep the building well ventilated and ensure that people are not in the church for too long. Certain parts of the Mass will continue to be omitted for the present time. We have received some good news over the last couple of weeks that the new variant Omicron is not as strong as the other variants – so long as you have had your booster jab – but it is still spreading more quickly than ever and could still lead to serious illness. So, we cannot underestimate what it can do. So please, continue to do the right thing. Keep watching the latest guidelines on the TV News. If we hear any further instructions from the Archdiocese we will let you know as soon as possible. If you feel like you may have any of the symptoms of Covid then you MUST stay at home until the symptoms end or until you have a negative Lateral Flow Test. Please stay safe and let us hope and pray for a better year in 2022.

Response to the Psalm....

"The Word was made flesh, and lived among us".