



Saint Michael's Messenger



December 2013

May we take this opportunity of wishing all the members of the congregation at St. Michael's Church and readers of this Newsletter, a joyful, blessed Christmastide and a happy New Year.

There are two Saints whom we should remember this month.

Saint Nicolas, whose Saint's Day is celebrated on 6th December, is the patron Saint of children, and was born circa 280 in Patara, a land that is part of present-day Turkey. St Nicholas was a Christian bishop who helped the needy, particularly children. After his death the legend of his care and gift-giving grew. St. Nicholas was later transformed into the legendary character called Santa Claus from the corruption of the word in Dutch *Sinterklaas*.

Little is known of St Sylvester whose Saint's Day is the 31st. He was Pope from 314 until his death on the 31st December 335. As Pope it seems strange that he did not attend the first Council of Nicaea in 325, the ecumenical council which debated so many important issues to establish the future direction of the Church; he sent delegates to represent him.

Each country has its own customs to celebrate the last day of the year, most being based on the wish to bring blessings for the following year and to 'begin on the right foot'. Samuel Pepys the diarist wrote on 31 December 1661 *'I have newly taken a solemn oath about abstaining from plays and wine which I am resolved to keep according to the letter of the oath which I keep by me'*.

The special foods to be eaten vary from country to country: in Spain, one should eat 12 grapes at midnight to signify good luck for the coming year. In France it is the tradition to eat oysters. In England and Scotland it is more traditional, on the stroke of midnight, that people open the back door (to let the old year out) and ask the first dark haired man to be seen to come through the front door. 'First Footing', as this is known by tradition, is for good luck.

Can you help?

Whether you are here all year round or visit from time to time, we would like to hear from you if you feel that you may be able to volunteer to help keep St. Michael's in good order. Currently there are only a few people who regularly dust, clean, or possibly tidy the garden area. You may not have a garden at home but feel creative enough to help. Any offers will be gratefully received. Please have a word with one of our Church Wardens.



Accommodation

If you have visitors over the coming weeks, and need to find rented accommodation for them, the chaplaincy apartment in Beaulieu is available for in December, January and March 2014 in return for a donation to church funds. Please contact Nicola for details or e-mail mailing@stmichaelsbeaulieusurmer.org

Helen Downes

At the recent requiem mass for Helen Downes it had been requested that, in lieu of flowers, a donation could be made to St. Michael's. This offering reached the generous sum of 1,700 Euros.

St Michaels Day Luncheon

Around 30 members of the congregation enjoyed a communal lunch in the garden. Everyone contributed to the food and wine that we enjoyed. A few drops of rain during the proceedings did not succeed in dampening the warm atmosphere of fellowship.

All Saints Dinner

Despite this being a quiet time of year, around twenty of the congregation enjoyed a delicious dinner cooked by Deanne. Brett Davy kindly contributed the wines. This dinner also helped raise funds for the church.

Useful web sites

For people who want to eat festive fare, try the following sites for Jamie Oliver, Delia Smith and Nigella Lawson who are all generous with recipes: jamieoliver.com, deliaonline.com, nigella.com Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall puts the emphasis on seasonal produce on: rivercottage.net For personalised greetings, Christmas cards and other gifts including flowers, go to: www.moonpig.com For local news in English www.thelocal.fr is a site worth a look.

Remembrance

If you would like a relative or close friend who has died to be remembered at the Sunday Eucharist nearest the anniversary of his or her death, please let one of our Churchwardens have the details. These should include the full name of the person you wish to be remembered, the date of death and your own contact details. Fr Philip



Dates to Remember

The Eucharist will be celebrated at 10.00 am on every Sunday this month. On the 15th. Father Chad Coussmaker will preside and preach.

Christmas Services

On Thursday 19th at 6.30 pm. there will be a joint Service with the Catholic Parish of Notre Dame de l'Esperance. Readings and Carols will be in English and French. The Service will be followed by seasonal refreshments. The collection from the Carol Service will be sent to UNICEF for their work among children in Syria.

Sunday 22nd 10.00 am. Service of 9 lessons, Carols and Eucharist followed by Refreshments.

Tuesday 24th 7.00 pm. Christmas Eve. First Eucharist of Christmas with the Blessing of the Crib.

Wednesday 25th 10.00 am. Christmas Day Eucharist

Sunday 29th 10.00 am. Eucharist for the First Sunday after Christmas.

Christmas collection to help handicapped children



Please note that there will be a Retiring Collection after the Services held on the 24th and 25th December. These offerings will be donated to the Association Perce-Neige (Snowdrop), which serves to help mentally handicapped children with specialised accommodation and activities to help each individual flourish and live as normally as possible. The Association also helps the families who are often isolated in the care of their child. The care given is for the lifetime of the child. Throughout France there are 29 homes managed by the Association Perce-Neige, one of which is in La Gaude, just across the river from Nice. You can read more about this Organisation, and the supportive aid that they give, on www.perce-neige.org.

Shepherds Fields (Beit Sahour, October 30th 2013)

And there were, “**shepherds abiding in the fields,
Keeping watch over their flock by night**” but
I have been there and there are no fields, just
Stone, scrub and silence on that barren hillside
So near to Bethlehem. And I saw sheep, scrawny,
Strong, like the shepherds who saw THE STAR
And heard the angels’ song and left their sheep
On that very first, Christmas Eve.

A poem from Josephine who recently visited Bethlehem



Want to get in touch?

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