

'She gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.'
 Luke 2: 1 - 14



A monthly news roundup for the Catholic community in England and Wales

December 2010

DIOCESE:

Middlesbrough Diocese is preparing the content of a Lenten & Eastertide evangelisation project titled, 'Why I'm a Catholic' It includes six workshops led by a range of Catholic speakers.

INITIATIVE:

The *livesimply* network has launched a new website www.catholicssocialteaching.org.uk dedicated to **Catholic Social Teaching.**

ENQUIRIES:

Anna contacted the Catholic Enquiry Office to ask: 'I am responding to the section on the website about discovering more about the rosary and how it can bring me closer to God... Please can you send me information?'
 (Name changed to protect privacy)

MEDIA:

Celebrating Pope Benedict XVI's historic first State Visit to the UK, the **Official DVD** tells the story of the extraordinary four days in September. To order the Official DVD of the Papal Visit 2010 please tel. 0161 488 1715 or visit: <http://www.thepapalvisit.org.uk/>



ECUMENISM:

Bible Reading Fellowship is providing a series of **videos** to help people connect with Christmas. The site offers a creative presentation of the Christmas story: <http://www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/>



Light of the World

At a recent press conference in Rome, Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, spoke about the content of the Peter Seewald's book-interview with Benedict XVI titled 'Light of the World.'

'We are before a Pope who does not exempt himself from any question, who wishes to clarify everything with simple language, but not because of this less profoundly, and who accepts with benevolence the provocations that so many questions pose. However, to reduce the whole interview to a phrase extrapolated from the whole of the thought of Benedict XVI would be an offense to the Pope's intelligence and a gratuitous instrumentalisation of his words.'

'What emerges from the complex picture of these pages, instead, is the vision of a Church called to be light of the world, sign of unity of the whole human race -- to use a famous expression of the Second Vatican Council -- and instrument to understand the essentials

of life. Even if it seems to our eyes a Church that gives scandal, which does not want to adapt herself to the behavior in vogue, which appears incomprehensible in her teachings and which, perhaps, lets one perceive possible internal conspiracies of men that darken her holiness. In any case, the teaching of the Master, the "light of the world," the city placed on the mountain to be seen by all, is the sign of contradiction.

"We are looking ahead to the coming of Christ. That consequently the One who has come is also, even more so, the One who is to come and that, from this perspective, we should live out our faith toward the future" (p. 63).

'Licht der Welt, obviously, is not a volume written by Benedict XVI; yet condensed here is his thought, his preoccupations and sufferings of these years, his pastoral program and his expectations for the future. The impression one gets is that of an optimistic Pope on the life of the Church, despite the difficulties she has always had.

"[The Church] is growing and thriving, she is quite dynamic. The number of

new priests worldwide has increased in recent years, also the number of seminarians" (p. 12).

'It's as if to say: the Church cannot be identified only in the fragment of a geographic area; she is a whole that founds, embraces and surpasses every part. A Church made up also of sinners; yet, without minimizing the evil, the Pope can rightly affirm that, "It would lead to a collapse of entire sectors of social life if [the Church] were no longer there" (p. 31), because the good she does is before everyone's eyes, despite the frequent desire to turn one's gaze elsewhere.'

For the full text see: <http://www.zenit.org/article-31058?l=english>

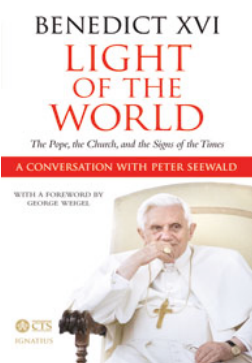


Image source: www.cts-online.org.uk

Happy Christmas

The Morning Prayer on Christmas Day concludes: 'Let the light of faith in our hearts shine through all that we do and say.' Responding to the invitation to allow Christ to shine through us has been our shared task the year through. Thank you to those of you who in the last year have worked in support of Home Mission in England and Wales. During this Advent and Christmas season let's pray for one another in a special way, that we may shine ever more brightly with Jesus' light.

Turning our attentions to 2011, if you're looking for some Home Mission New Year's resolutions, here are some month-by-month suggestions:

January: Offer to say a prayer for someone in need or give them a suitably worded prayer card

February: Display a religious image prominently in your home

March: Use the greeting 'God bless you' in conversation and in letters and emails

April: Make the sign of the cross before eating a meal

May: Read your Bible in a public place such as on the bus or in a cafe

June: Wear a religious symbol, for example, a cross and chain

July: Give money or your time to a local charity

August: Take a spiritual book to read on holiday

September: Ring a family member or friend that you've not spoken to for some time

October: Offer to help an elderly neighbour – perhaps get their shopping or invite them round for a coffee?

November: Send remembrance cards to all those you know who have been bereaved in the last twelve months

December: Only send religious Christmas cards



*Seasons blessings to all,
Clare Ward,
Home Mission Advisor*

Where people are at

The New Evangelisation - one that is new in means, ardour and expression - is something the Holy Father has repeatedly invited all to engage in. A key emphasis is that the Catholic Faith is seen and heard in every day life. The following video offers a creative way of reaching out to people where they are at... the Hallelujah Chorus being sung in a shopping centre:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>

Friday Fast

In an Advent letter to parishes, Bishop Kieran Conry of Arundel and Brighton spoke about restoring the Friday Fast.

He said: 'This was one of the most obvious signs of Catholic identity, apart from going to Mass. It determined the diet in places like prison and hospital, and was something that Catholics were instinctively conscious of: we knew that we couldn't have meat like everybody else that day, and it was a source of a sort of pride – it marked us out as different... Today we are perhaps less willing to be marked out, in case we are marked out as not just different, but 'odd'. And that is what we had been told, and began to believe... But the Pope's visit has said to us that this is not "odd", but that it's actually important.'

Full text:

<http://www.dabnet.org/Bishop/PastoralMessages/2010/Pastoral+Letter>

Narnia Film Release

The latest of the Narnia films was released in the UK on 10 December. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, the third published novel in 'The Chronicles of Narnia' series returns Edmund and Lucy Pevensie, as well as their priggish cousin, Eustace Scrubb, to Narnia. There they accompany King Caspian on a voyage to find the seven lords who were banished when Caspian's evil uncle Miraz stole the throne. This perilous journey brings them face-to-face with many wonders and dangers as they sail toward Aslan's Country at the eastern end of the world. One critique has shared that the Christian message is powerfully communicated throughout.

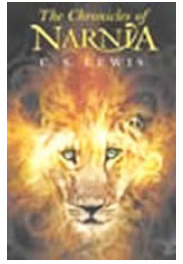


Image source: <http://www.harpercollinschildrensbooks.co.uk/characters/narnia.aspx>

9/10 think Christ is not vital to Christmas

Only ten per cent of adults believe the birth of Jesus is the most important part of Christmas. Young people (25-34 year-olds) are even less likely to prioritise the religious significance of the festival – fewer than one in 20 – whereas one in five of the over-60s put the Christian significance first. The results come from a survey for the Children's Society which paradoxically also found that nearly 90 per cent think the season has become too commercialised. The research was commissioned by the charity to herald its Advent campaign to raise £1 million through Christingle services.

Source: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/> 1 Dec. 2010

www.christianity.org.uk

www.christianity.org.uk has taken a lot of planning and design to make it available for all abilities, age groups and faith traditions. In addition to a host of information, there is space to leave a prayer and to ask for more information. It is being provided free by the Christian Enquiry Agency.



Shining A Light



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Parish representatives have been gathering across England and Wales to receive paintings and candles that were blessed by Pope Benedict XVI to support the legacy of his visit to the UK.

On the evening of the 8 December Bishop Peter Doyle celebrated a special Mass in Northampton Cathedral in thanksgiving for the recent visit. In his homily he said: 'May God, who sent his Son into the world as the Light that shines in the dark, help you to bring his light to the world.'

Meanwhile in Hexham and Newcastle Diocese the blessed candles and pictures were distributed to every parish in the diocese on World Mission Sunday, 24 October (<http://www.mission.org.uk/missionsunday.php>).