

**NEWS BULLETIN - ST ALBAN & ST STEPHEN**  
14 Beaconsfield Road, St Albans, AL1 3RB  
Office Hours Monday-Friday 9am-1pm Tel: 01727 853585  
E-mail: stalbans@rcdow.org.uk Website: www.albanstephen.org  
YouTube: youtube.com/c/SsAlbanandStephenCatholicChurch  
**EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020**

Parish Team: Fr Michael O'Boy (Parish Priest) Fr Julian Davies (Assistant Priest)  
Rev. Steve Pickard (Deacon)

Safeguarding Lead: Mary Harber / stalbanssg3@safeguardrcdow.org.uk / 07976 277059

Slowly, very slowly, things begin to turn. Admittedly restrictions remain, but we have now returned to the public celebration of Mass and are allowed to celebrate weddings and Funeral Masses, albeit within certain parameters. The Baptism catechists have hosted their first virtual preparation session and we have begun celebrating some long delayed baptisms and first communions. Now that the bishops have issued the relevant guidelines, I hope in the coming week to set a date for the RCIA candidates to be baptised, received and confirmed. I hope it will not be too long before we have the go ahead to organise this year's confirmations. Of course all these celebrations will be somewhat different, but what is heartening, certainly with regards to the First Communions, is how the stripping away of all that can surround our celebrations, leads to an absolute focus on what is essential. The First Holy Communions we have celebrated may be smaller, and the celebration more muted, with fewer guests and no singing, but the focus, our reception of Jesus in the Eucharist, remains.

Thank you to all of those who have returned the Parish Survey regarding your experience of Parish in these last months. Please, if you have not already done so, go to the parish website at albanstephen.org and complete the survey; paper copies are also available in the porch after Mass or can be downloaded from the website. There is just over a week to the deadline and completing it in this way will assist those collating these and the paper based responses. I look forward to seeing the completed analysis and do not wish to pre-empt the outcome, but initial observations of the website returns show that two thirds of the respondents have accessed the live stream Masses from our Church, with three quarters of these doing so on a daily or weekly basis. Well over two thirds of respondents have felt cared for, with one in ten expressing no opinion. Tellingly only one in five of website respondents felt that our communication regarding the financial challenges facing the parish have been about right, with the overwhelming majority, eight out of ten, saying that these challenges had not been registered strongly enough or hardly at all. Money and finances are not the easiest of subjects to raise, but having recently discussed the issues with members of the fiancé committee I think it is timely to raise them more widely. In doing so, I am all too conscious that the challenges we face as a parish are a reality that many parishioners will be living and experiencing much closer to home. And then, even if you are fortunate enough that finances and job security are not your personal worry, its highly likely that they are the worries of children, family and friends dear to you.

Since lockdown parishioners who contribute regularly to the parish via standing orders, have continued to do so and I am grateful for your ongoing support. However, the weekly income received in loose cash or via the planned giving envelopes has fallen by just over £2,000 a week. This represents a potential fall in income approaching £40,000 over the last 20-week period. At the same time just over forty parishioners, who were giving via the offertory collection, have decided to give by standing order. Others have posted their offering through the presbytery door or the collection box at the back of the church. In addition, people have donated using internet banking. A couple of significant but anonymous donations have also been received. Thank you to all concerned! All of this has acted to alleviate the downturn in offertory income. Nonetheless, I think it would be wise to assume that over the past twenty weeks we could reckon on a potential drop in offertory income of between £30-35,000. As the return to Mass continues I sense that giving will begin to pick up, but I suspect it will be some time, perhaps not until the New Year, before it returns to what it was. Indeed, I think it is highly

possible that we will face the end of this year with a drop in offertory giving approaching £70,000.

The furloughing of staff during the lockdown will help cushion this blow to some extent as will savings on other running costs, but it should be noted that we did not take up the customary Easter Offering for the parish clergy, a collection which helps support the clergy allowance and which would have positively augmented parish funds, and that we have also lost rental income from the Parish Centre. Indeed, as you will be aware from last week's bulletin, the lockdown does not spare us from the reality of guttering in need of repair and flat roofs in need of replacement; rather, as is the case with streaming, cleaning and PPE, it presents us with new costs and priorities. In the next six months we are looking at spending something like £16,000 on roofs and guttering, with up to £8,000 more on a permanent live streaming solution.

Currently we are considering the setting up of a giving account which could be accessed on the website. We are also investigating contactless giving, but at this stage, rather than making an appeal, all I would ask is that those who have been accustomed to supporting the parish using cash and the offertory promise envelopes consider setting up a standing order. This would cut down on handling and secure your offering in the weeks and months ahead. If you would like to set up a standing order please contact the presbytery by phone or email [stalbans@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:stalbans@rcdow.org.uk) for details. Setting up a standing order is a very simple process and does not require a visit to a bank.

Finally, Michael Roche, will be stepping back from his temporary role as Parish Administrator in September. We are very grateful to Michael for stepping into the role and are now looking to recruit a replacement. If you know of anybody who is interested further details can be found at <https://jobs.rcdow.org.uk/parish-administrator-ss-alban-stephen-church/>

**Volunteer Stewards** In order for any Mass to take place, and to increase the provision of weekend Masses, we need volunteer stewards to assist those attending and to sanitise the Church afterwards. We are in absolute need of more volunteers, especially if we are to increase the number of Masses and avoid its becoming an onerous responsibility for those who have already volunteered. More hands, lighter work! Please contact Melanie O'Neill, the chair of the Parish Pastoral Council, if you are under 70 and willing to volunteer. Melanie's contact details are [mjoneill5@btinternet.com](mailto:mjoneill5@btinternet.com) or 07900 051956. Remember, our parish like many others relies on many older or retired people to act as volunteers. At the moment many of these are being asked to shield and to remain indoors, so we need more of our younger parishioners to step up.

**Future Streaming** One of the challenges and one of the consolations of the past few months has been the streaming of a daily Mass from the Church; a challenge because it took me some way from my comfort zone, a consolation because it was a means of bringing the Mass to and communicating with the parish at large. With or without the coronavirus it is clear that the live streaming of Mass from the parish is and could continue to be a vital means or way for sick and housebound to remain connected to the rest of the parish. It's also a way in which other celebrations can be shared with family and friends who are unable to attend. Recently we met with an experienced company who have equipped many places of worship and talked through what would be needed to stream Mass from the Church. In doing so we have stressed the need for the close ups which will maintain the sense of intimacy which many of you have commented on appreciatively. Nothing comes cheaply and an initial quote puts a price tag of around £8,000 on the provision, networking and installation of a camera system.

### **Housekeeping Notes for Attending Church**

Please book in advance & wear a face covering.

Observe 2m distancing at all times

Refrain from moving around the Church,

Avoid touching surfaces as you move around

Do not to return to your seats after receiving Holy Communion

If you are under 70 please consider volunteering

## MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

### Sunday 2 August - 18<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

6pm Vigil Mass will be offered for Karen Brennan (RIP)  
10am Mass will be offered for John Brian Kent  
6pm Mass will be offered for the People of the Parish  
Reading 1, Isaiah 55:1-3  
Responsorial Psalm, 144  
Reading 2, Romans 8:35-39  
Gospel, Matthew 14:13-21

### Monday 3 August - feria

10 am Mass will be offered for Tom Bagge (RIP)  
7 pm Mass will be offered for John & Mary Hopgood (RIP)  
Reading 1, Jeremiah 28:1-17  
Responsorial Psalm, 118  
Gospel, Matthew 14:22-36

### Tuesday 4 August - St John Mary Vianney, Curé of Ars

10 am Mass will be offered for Gwyn Davies (Anniv)  
Reading 1, Jeremiah 30:1-2, 12-15, 18-22  
Responsorial Psalm, 101  
Gospel, Matthew 15:1-2, 10-14

### Wednesday 5 August - feria

10 am Mass will be offered for Italo Maestranzi (RIP)  
7 pm Mass will be offered for John Cunningham (RIP)  
Reading 1, Jeremiah 31:1-7  
Responsorial Psalm, Jeremiah 31  
Gospel, Matthew 15:21-28

### Thursday 6 August - THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

10 am Mass will be offered for Celia Dunne (RIP)  
Reading 1, Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14  
Responsorial Psalm, 96  
Gospel, Matthew 17:1-9

### Friday 7 August - feria

10 am Mass will be offered for Tom Bagge (RIP)  
7 pm Mass will be offered for Paddy Crowley (Anniv)  
Reading 1, Nahum 2:1,3, 3:1-3, 6-7  
Responsorial Psalm, Deuteronomy 32  
Gospel, Matthew 16:24-28

### Saturday 8 August - St Dominic

Reading 1, Habakkuk 1:12-2:4  
Responsorial Psalm, 9  
Gospel, Matthew 17:14-20  
6pm Vigil Mass will be offered for Elaine Gatta (RIP)

### Sunday 9 August - 19<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

10am Mass will be offered for the People of the Parish  
6pm Mass will be offered for Leonardo Venetico (RIP)

## PLEASE PRAY

This week for all the members of Churches Together in St Albans.

For all the Sick in our Parish and those suffering from the Coronavirus.

For those who have died recently: John Brayne, Royln Seeboruth

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Pete & Susan Helliwell, Gwyn Davies and Paddy Crowley

The Funeral Mass for John Brayne (RIP) will be held at 10 am on Monday 10 August followed by cremation at West Herts Crematorium.

*May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace*

## Parish Survey

Many thanks to everyone who has already completed the parish survey, the response has been very encouraging. Your thoughts on how Lockdown has affected your views of the church and the response of the parish in supporting you are greatly appreciated and will be invaluable should similar restrictions be imposed in the future. As we understand that some people might have been away, we have extended the deadline to the 10<sup>th</sup> August so that everyone has the chance to submit their feedback. You are invited to complete a questionnaire that has been sent out electronically with the weekly Parish Update and is also available to download from the Parish Website, paper copies are available in the porch after all Masses, or you can fill out the Survey online [here](#)

Please return completed forms to the parish office either by email to [stalbans@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:stalbans@rcdow.org.uk) or by hand delivery through the presbytery door or by posting to Ss Alban & Stephen, 14 Beaconsfield Rd, St Albans AL1 3RB by 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Please note that your personal e-mail details will not be passed on to those analysing your responses

**Sunday & Weekday Masses** Please remember there are a limited number of spaces in church so it is necessary to pre-book a seat. Please contact the parish office [stalbans@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:stalbans@rcdow.org.uk) or phone 01727 853585 to reserve a place.

**Contact Details** In order to facilitate tracking and tracing people are requested to provide a contact number when they come to Mass. Please note that registers of attendance & contact details will be destroyed after 21 days.

**Funerals** We are now allowed to have Requiem Masses but government guidelines limit attendance at these to 30 people. This number would also include the organist, if a family wished to have music, and the 4 stewards needed to marshal and sanitise the church afterwards. Families will also need to bear in mind that current guidelines prohibit singing and curtail other aspects of a customary Funeral Mass e.g. the number of readings, the intercessions, the eulogy and anything which might lengthen the time spent in church.

**The Sunday Obligation** As Catholics we are asked to attend Mass every Sunday. It is an integral part of what it is to be a practicing Catholic. It's here that we hear Christ's command in the scriptures and are nourished with his body and blood; in the Mass we are called to and equipped for the lives that we are to live in the world at large. At this time the Bishops have released us from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Those shielding and vulnerable should be assured that they are under no obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Please consider participating via the streamed Masses. Given that there are a limited number of spaces in Church, please would parishioners who are not at work in the week and who are free to do so, think about coming to Mass during the week instead of at the weekend. In this way there will be more spaces available for those who can only attend at weekends.

**First Holy Communion & Confirmation 2021** For those expecting to make their First Holy Communion or be confirmed next year (2021) please note that the preparation programmes for these will not begin until January 2021 and that registration forms will be available in mid-September. The running of these programmes depends on the support and assistance of volunteers to act as Table Leaders and Catechists. With the current restrictions in place, and the likelihood of their continuing in some shape or form, it is likely that we will have to run the programmes, certainly the First Communion Programme, in a different way. With up to 100 children making First Holy Communion each year we will almost certainly have to divide these up into small groups running at different times. All this requires planning, but first and foremost it requires volunteers without whom it will be impossible to offer the programmes. Being a volunteer Table Leader and catechists can appear daunting, our hope is to dedicate the autumn term, the period before the programmes begin, for the training and formation of Table Leaders and

catechists. If you would like to find out more, please contact Fr Michael re First Holy Communion and Fr Julian re Confirmation.

**The Transfiguration of the Lord - 6 August** All three synoptic gospels tell the story of the transfiguration of Jesus – often a sign of the importance of an event from Jesus' life. Jesus took his inner circle of apostles – Peter, James, and John – up a mountain, which in the Bible is a place of revelation. These three apostles then saw Jesus as part of another important trio, with Moses and Elijah. Then the voice of God itself made an appearance, uttering: "This is my Son" and "Listen to him." Unfortunately, none of the apostles seemed to understand what had just happened. First, they were half-asleep when the whole thing started. They were also terrified to the point of talking nonsense about building shelters for the holy figures. Then on the way down they started an off-topic debate about the resurrection and Elijah. What the apostles didn't grasp right away was the significance of the fact that Moses and Elijah were "talking with" Jesus. This identified Jesus with the law and the prophets. It showed how Jesus had the same authority as these two pillars of Israel's tradition and how that authority came from the same God. To leave no doubt, God's voice drove home the point with words heard at an earlier affirmation of Jesus' status, his baptism: "This is my son, the beloved". What the apostles also didn't get was that they couldn't stay on the mountain. One can sympathise with their desire for such a wondrous break from the difficult path of discipleship. It is indeed wonderful to find inspiration in a shining vision of Jesus, but the message to the church then and now is that witnessing glory is one thing, following is another.

**St John Mary Vianney, Curé of Ars (1786-1859) - Feast 4 August** John was the son of a peasant farmer, and a slow and unpromising candidate for the priesthood but was eventually ordained on account of his devoutness. In 1818, he became the parish priest of Ars-en-Dombes, an isolated village some distance from Lyon, and remained there for the rest of his life because his parishioners would not let him leave. He was a noted preacher, and a celebrated confessor: such was his fame, and his reputation for insight into his penitents' souls and their futures, that he spent up to 18 hours a day in the confessional, so great was the demand. The tens of thousands of people who came to visit him turned Ars into a place of pilgrimage. The French State awarded him the medal of the Légion d'Honneur in 1848, and he sold it and gave the money to the poor.

**Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St Mary Major - 5 August** The Council of Ephesus in 431 formally proclaimed the mother of Jesus as the Mother of God, and the church (basilica) of St Mary Major on the Esquiline Hill in Rome was built shortly afterwards to celebrate her motherhood. This is the oldest church in the West that is dedicated to Our Lady. The title "Mother of God" emphasises the central truth of the Incarnation, that Jesus Christ was not only a true man, but God also; and not only God, but man born of a woman.