

NEWS BULLETIN - ST ALBAN & ST STEPHEN
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SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 26th July 2020

Parish Team: Fr Michael O'Boy (Parish Priest) Fr Julian Davies (Assistant Priest)
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In the gospel given to us for today Christ likens the kingdom of heaven to a treasure or pearl which those who have discovered it will risk everything for. These past months have taught me to treasure much. And in saying this I am not referring to anything grand. I am referring to ordinary things. It has taught me to treasure ordinary everyday things; that coffee from a proper coffee shop or vendor, and not least the chance to speak to others in person and to meet up with friends and family. Somehow things that we may previously have taken for granted, have assumed a new importance. What that thing is, what that 'treasure' consists in, will be different for each of us. We are, after all, different people, but as we begin the slow walk back to whatever the 'new' normal might be, I think it is worth asking ourselves what it is I have come to 'treasure' these past months, and even more importantly not to lose sight of what it is or was that made this time bearable.

Naturally the things we treasure will say something about us to others – and they will teach us things about ourselves – but the relationship we have to the things we really treasure, the feelings and emotion they stir up in us, the grief that losing them provokes, is a useful barometer of how you and I should stand in relation to the kingdom of heaven. In the Gospel that we listen to today the loss of the kingdom of heaven is not taken lightly; it is a source of anguish and pain. If the kingdom of heaven is something that we aspire to, if it is the treasure or discovery that our whole lives are ordered to, that we hope for, then it must be something we are prepared to risk everything for. Simply put, the intensity that can mark our feelings for and about the things of this world, is a pale reflection of the intensity which should characterise our feeling for the kingdom of heaven. To sell everything to buy a single field, to sell everything to buy a single pearl, that is sheer recklessness, but if the treasure is the kingdom of heaven, then for those who look to that kingdom, such recklessness is to be embraced. That's what we do for the things we treasure, for the things we love. We hold on to them.

Fr Michael

Housekeeping Notes for Attending Church

Please book in advance (details below).
Please remember to wear a face covering.

In a bid to prevent the spread of the virus we would ask you:
to observe the 2m distancing at all times
to refrain from moving around the Church,
to avoid touching surfaces as you move through the church,
to leave the Church after you have received Holy Communion and not to return to your seats

If you are under 70 please consider volunteering (details below)

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. My sense from our recent parish council meetings and from experience in other parishes is that we should continue with the livestreaming of a daily Mass and that we should look to a more permanent solution.

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 and to maintain the sense of intimacy which many of you have appreciated. 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.

Weekly Offering Since the lockdown in March our weekly income has fallen by approximately £2000 a week. That loss has been mitigated to some extent by the furloughing of staff, by people posting their offering through the presbytery door or setting up standing orders. During the lock down a survey showed that the guttering at the top of the bell tower is in immediate need of replacement, while a downpour of rain and subsequent leak, highlighted the need to replace the flat roof covering the sacristy and Meeting Room 2. Both are unforeseen expenditures and, as you can imagine, neither will be particularly cheap. At this stage, I would encourage those who have not set up a standing order for their weekly offering to consider doing so and to email the parish office at stalbins@rcdow.org.uk asking for details of how to do so.

Remember to keep your distance from others and to observe proper hygiene...

- **Catch it - sneeze into a tissue.**
- **Bin it - bin the tissue.**
- **Kill it - wash your hands with soap and water.**
- **Do not touch your face unless you've washed your hands.**

Volunteer Stewards In order for any Mass to take place it is necessary to have four volunteer stewards on duty to assist those attending and to sanitise the Church after each Mass. We are in absolute need of more volunteers, especially if we are to increase the number of Masses and make sure that it does not become 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 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.

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.

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 stalbins@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.

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday 26th July - SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

6pm Mass will be offered for Vincent O'Reilly (Ann)
10am Mass will be offered for Eric Hopkins (RIP)
6pm Mass will be offered for Ivan Potiuk (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 Kings 3:5,7-12
Responsorial Psalm, 118
Reading 2, Romans 8:28-30
Gospel, Matthew 13:44-52

Monday 27 July - feria

10 am Mass will be offered for Fr Julian Davies (Ints)
7 pm Mass will be offered Peggy McGlynn (RIP)
Reading 1, Jeremiah 13:1-11
Responsorial Psalm, Deuteronomy 32:18-21
Gospel, Matthew 13:31-35

Tuesday 28 July - feria

10 am Mass will be offered for Patrick Cahill (RIP)
Reading 1, Jeremiah 14:17-22
Responsorial Psalm, 78
Gospel, Matthew 13:36-43

Wednesday 29 July - St Martha

10 am Mass will be offered for Margaret Sweeney (RIP)
7 pm Mass will be offered for Billy O'Boy (RIP)
Reading 1, Jeremiah 15:10, 16-21
Responsorial Psalm, 58
Gospel, John 11:19-27

Thursday 30 July - feria

10 am Mass will be offered for Annie Coakley (RIP)
Reading 1, Jeremiah 18:1-6
Responsorial Psalm, 145
Gospel, Matthew 13:47-53

Friday 31 July - St Ignatius Loyola

10 am Mass will be offered for Tom Bagge (RIP)
7 pm Mass will be offered for Christy Barry (RIP)
Reading 1, Jeremiah 26:1-9
Responsorial Psalm, 68
Gospel, Matthew 13:54-58

Saturday 1 August - St Alphonsus Mary d'Liguori

There is no Saturday morning Mass as there are two First Communion Masses being celebrated in the afternoon. The Mass intended for Hugh Coyle (RIP) will be offered on Wednesday 19 August at 10 am.
Reading 1, Jeremiah 26:11-16, 24
Responsorial Psalm, 68
Gospel, Matthew 14:1-12
6pm Vigil Mass will be offered for Karen Brennan (RIP)

Sunday 2 August - EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

10am Mass will be offered for John Brian Kent
6pm Mass will be offered for the People of the Parish

PLEASE PRAY

With Churches Together in St Albans we pray this week for

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

For those who have died recently: Carole Pointer, Anthony Sumner, Allfonso Lewis Lucinge and Janina Chilczuk

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Vincent O'Reilly.

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

Parish Survey

Fr Michael, Fr Julian and the PPC would greatly value your thoughts on how Lockdown has affected your views of the church and the response of the parish in supporting you, albeit within the stringent confines of Government regulations.

You are all invited to complete a questionnaire that is being sent out electronically with the weekly Parish Update and will also be available to download from the Parish Website. Paper copies will be available in the porch after all Masses from the 19th July. You can fill out the Survey online [here](#)

Your views are very important for the evaluation of our response to the Lockdown. Helping us to learn from your experiences will be invaluable should similar restrictions be imposed in the future.

Please return completed forms *to the parish office either by email to 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 1st August 2020*. Please note that your personal e-mail details will not be passed on to those analysing your responses.

Virtual Lourdes Pilgrimage As the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage cannot take place this year, a virtual pilgrimage will take place instead from 26th July to 1st August, with a full programme of Masses and devotions. Full details can be found on the events page of the diocesan website and on the attached poster. All are welcome to join in this virtual pilgrimage on the dedicated Westminster Diocese Lourdes Pilgrimage YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9AT-YIsH22Hbp2rnIG7jsA>

A Catholic Response to George Floyd and Black Lives Matter Westminster Justice and Peace Commission are running an event exploring how we respond to racial injustice and discrimination as a diverse and multicultural Catholic community. This online event takes place on 24th July from 7.30pm to 8.30pm. Guest speakers include Baroness Scotland (London, UK) and Leslye Colvin (Alabama, USA) who will guide a reflection on responses and what action to take. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-catholic-response-to-george-floyd-and-black-lives-matter-tickets-112811815176>

Landings Online London Landings invites those exploring new ways to return to their faith to reconnect through an on-line, eight-week Landings Programme of informal sharing and discussion. For information and to register interest in joining a July on-line programme, contact Ruby Almeida: landings.london@gmail.com

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 then, that we are called to and equipped for the lives that we are to live in the world at large. During this time of pandemic however, the Bishops have released us from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. First and foremost, therefore, I would like to reassure those who are shielding and vulnerable that they are not under an obligation to attend Sunday Mass, indeed I would encourage those parishioners in this position to make use of the streamed Masses, and in this way to join safely with those in Church. Moreover, given that there are a limited number of spaces in Church, I would encourage those parishioners who are not at work in the week and who are free to do so, to think about coming to Mass during the week instead of at the weekend for the time being. In this way there will be more spaces available for those who can only attend at weekends.

Baptism: Fr Julian is now getting in contact with those families who have had to postpone a child's baptism. Our first priority is to establish alternative dates for those families who have completed the baptism preparation course. We are also looking to a 'virtual' baptism preparation course for those parents yet to complete the course and thereafter to setting dates for their children's baptisms.

Confirmation: We have yet to receive guidelines from the bishops on confirmation but will be in contact with parents and candidates as soon as we do.

Marriage: Many couples have postponed their wedding ceremony until next year, but we have some that will be taking place, according to the guidelines for marriages, in the next few months. Fr Michael has been in contact with all the couples expecting to get married since the lockdown commenced, but if you were expecting to hear from him, and have not done so, please contact him at the presbytery.

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.

St Martha 29 July was the sister of Mary of Bethany and Lazarus. Her feast day comes a week after that of St Mary Magdalene because of the probably erroneous tradition that Mary Magdalene was the same person as Martha's sister. Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus were evidently close friends of Jesus. He came to their home simply as a welcomed guest. The sisters feel free to call on Jesus at their brother's death, even though a return to Judea at that time seems almost certain death. No doubt Martha was an active sort of person. On one occasion, she prepares the meal for Jesus and his guests and complains that Mary simply sits and listens to Jesus. He gently explains that it Mary's is the better way. In Martha we see ourselves -- worried and distracted by all we have to do and forgetting to spend time with Jesus. But it is comforting that Jesus loved Martha just the same. Martha's great glory is her simple and strong statement of faith in Jesus after her brother's death. "Jesus told her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world'". Saint Martha is the patron saint of cooks, housewives, servants, waiters and waitresses.