

NEWS BULLETIN - ST ALBAN & ST STEPHEN

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NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 9th August 2020

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I have never been very good at foreign languages, so when I learnt in seminary that I would have to study Greek and Hebrew, I was less than ecstatic. In fact, I well remember the second year exam; the sweat pouring down my back as the examiners' questions about nouns, verbs and adjectives whirled around my head, and more especially the looks of incredulity on their faces as I read out, and slaughtered, the Greek. I was way out of my depth and the water was pouring in.

In today's Gospel, the disciples find themselves in a similar situation; out of their depth, in the midst of a headwind, they were at the mercy of the forces around, in fear of their lives. At such times we tend to do what Peter did; we tend to look to God, to Christ, to save us...we put out a hand and say Lord...if you can command it...things will happen...friends and family will be well again...the situation will sort itself out...but, more often than not, in the midst of our turmoil, when we desperately want God to be there, to show himself, we cannot find him...he is, or seems to be, strangely absent. Why?

We all know that it is better to make friendships, forge relationships and reach decisions in the light and coolness of the day, rather than the heat of the moment...when things are upside down it can be difficult to appreciate who our friends are and what it is best to do. In the midst of the storm the disciples learnt this simple truth. Christ, their friend and saviour, walked towards them across the lake, and they failed to recognise him. These were the people who knew Christ best; who had accompanied him on his journeys, who had spoken to him, and still they did not know him, 'it is a ghost they said'. Indeed, even Peter, once he had recognised Christ's voice and stepped out of the boat, lost faith.

That the disciples should not have recognised Christ is understandable. Who could have expected him to walk on Water, and anyway, the conditions were not ideal. But that I think is the point. We tend to reach out to God, to Christ, when things are going wrong, when our powers of discernment are at their weakest, and when we don't find him we become disillusioned - we convince ourselves that he isn't there for us - rather than facing facts and acknowledging purely and simply - that it is we who fail to recognise him. Put differently, it seems to me, that you and I have to face a simple question. How can I expect to find and recognise Christ in the turmoil of my life, at those times that I need him most, when I've never taken the trouble to know him in the calm of the day, when the wind, the earthquakes and the fire have subsided and all there is, is the sound of the gentle breeze where he spoke to Elijah.

Knowing Christ may well be a tall order, but if the storm is to be calmed, that knowing, that recognising, is something we must strive after...and here Peter, that impetuous disciple of little faith, is our greatest hope. Yes, he lacked faith, but be that as it may, the little faith he possessed was enough for him to step out of the boat, enough for him to risk and to trust, enough for him to win that wonderful privilege of being held by the Lord.

Faith and trust in abundance would be a wonderful gift, but Christ is able to work with the little we have, just as he called out to his disciples, courage, do not be afraid, it is I, he will call out to us because, our salvation, our being saved is not 'our' work or doing, it is first and foremost his.

For the remainder of August we will continue with our current Mass schedule which has three Sunday Masses: a Saturday Vigil Mass at 6 pm, Sunday morning at 10 am and Sunday evening at 6 pm. Assuming there is no upsurge in the spread of the coronavirus, we will to the re-introduction of an additional Sunday Mass at the beginning of

September, possibly reverting to the more usual times of Saturday 6pm and Sunday 9.30, 11.30 and 7.00pm. I very much hope that we may also be in a position to think about the Mass at St John Fisher School in Marshalwick. Of course any additional Mass requires additional stewards. If you are under 70 and would be willing to volunteer please contact Melanie O'Neill, the chair of our parish council, who is co-ordinating the rota of volunteer stewards. 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 shielding or remain indoors. We need others to step up.

Fr Michael

The Presidents of Churches Together in England have issued the following statement

We, as Presidents of Churches Together in England, have responded to the killing of George Floyd in the United States, and the widespread call for real change to combat racial injustice in our world, above all in our own country. We have spent time over the past few weeks listening to voices of people from the black community, especially the younger generation. This has been a deeply moving experience and illustrated powerfully the many profound changes of heart and actions that need to be made. The attitude that regards black people – and indeed other people of ethnic minorities – as inferior is evil and mars our common humanity. We challenge this unreservedly, recognising the constant experiences of racism, including micro aggression, which black people face.

We believe that churches have a significant role to play in combating racial injustice. If we are to be effective in doing so, we must look at ourselves.

We are painfully aware of the racism that blights the life of our churches. We are intent upon a process of identifying racial injustice within our churches – current and historic – repenting of it and taking action to effect real change. This includes the potential for discriminatory behaviour in the way that we make church appointments, which we know can happen at the conscious or unconscious level. We want to ensure that these processes are just and demonstrate the so often neglected gospel truth of Colossians 3:11 “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all”. In this verse Paul makes it clear that racial injustice and discrimination is not only profoundly unjust and an affront to God but also the very denial of Christ who reached out to all human beings.

Some Member Churches of Churches Together in England have already embarked upon this journey of tackling racial injustice. The Church of England plans a new action group, and among the Free Churches work by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, together with Baptists Together is already under way, as is also true for the Catholic Church. The Pentecostal Forum has long held this issue in its view, as have the Orthodox Churches.

We call upon all churches to travel together on this journey of racial justice so that together, as one community of churches in England, we may reach out in love and respect to one another in pursuit of our common witness.

An area of great concern to us as Presidents is the relationship between the black community and the criminal justice system. We will therefore be facilitating conversations between young black women and men and senior members of the police service. We are also seeking to engage both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice in further considering the day-to-day experience of many young black people in England.

We encourage all churches throughout England to do all they can to build trust and improve accountability between black communities, the police, civic bodies and wider community groups. In particular, we call upon groupings of Church Leaders throughout the nation to reach out to their black colleagues in church leadership who are currently absent from their membership, making more inclusive ecumenical leadership. Our desire is that these groups will create spaces for those in authority to listen, as we have, to the powerful testimony of young black women and men as a step towards greater social cohesion.

We see these issues as matters of gospel and faith for all who follow Jesus Christ, the one who calls every nation and people to the justice of the Kingdom of God.

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday 9 August - 19th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

6pm Vigil Mass will be offered for Elaine Gatta (RIP)
10am Mass will be offered for the People of the Parish
6pm Mass will be offered for Leonardo Venetico (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 Kings 19:9, 11-13
Responsorial Psalm, 84
Reading 2, Romans 9:1-5
Gospel, Matthew 14:22-33

Monday 10 August - St Laurence

10am Mass will be the Funeral Mass of John Brayne (RIP)
7pm Mass will be offered for Tom Bagge (RIP)
Reading 1, 2 Corinthians 9:6-10
Responsorial Psalm, 111
Gospel, John 12:24-26

Tuesday 11 August - St Clare

10am Mass will be offered for Bernadette Keegan (Ints)
Reading 1, Ezekiel 2:8-3:4
Responsorial Psalm, 118
Gospel, Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14

Wednesday 12 August - feria

10am Mass will be offered for Jean Bergin (RIP)
7pm Mass will be offered for Eric Hopkins (RIP)
Reading 1, Ezekiel 9:1-7, 10:18-22
Responsorial Psalm, 112
Gospel, Matthew 18:15-20

Thursday 13 August - feria

10am Mass will be offered for Bernadette Witchard (Ints)
Reading 1, Ezekiel 12:1-12
Responsorial Psalm, 77
Gospel, Matthew 18:21-19:1

Friday 14 August - St Maximilian Kolbe

10am Mass will be offered for Karen Brennan (RIP)
7pm Mass will be offered for Mary Curran (RIP)
Reading 1, Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63
Responsorial Psalm, Isaiah 12
Gospel, Matthew 19:3-12

Saturday 15 August - feria

Reading 1, Ezekiel 18:1-10, 13, 30-32
Responsorial Psalm, 50
Gospel, Matthew 19:13-15

Sunday 16 August - The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

6pm Vigil Mass will be offered for John & Josie Sheehan
Wedding Anniv. Renewal
10am Mass will be offered for People of the Parish
6pm Mass will be offered for Joseph Deacy (Anniv)

PLEASE PRAY

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

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

For those who have died recently: John Brayne, Eddie Mansfield, Marion Haye, Anthony O'Shea and Royln Seeboruth.

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Joseph Deacy

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

So far the response to the parish survey on the effects of Lockdown has been very good, many thanks to all of you who have already completed this. As some people have been away, the deadline was extended to the 10th August, so this weekend is your last opportunity to respond - your views would be most welcome and helpful for future planning.

The questionnaire is 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 or by hand delivery through the presbytery door. Please note that your personal e-mail details will not be passed on to those analysing your responses

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

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.

Parish Administrator Michael Roche will be stepping back from his temporary role as Parish Administrator in September. Further details can be found at <https://jobs.rcdow.org.uk/parish-administrator-ss-alban-stephen-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 stalbans@rcdow.org.uk or phone 01727 853585 to reserve a place.

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.

Commemorating 75 years since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Justice & Peace invite you all to attend a short prayer for peace at the Abbey's Japanese Peace Obelisk situated on the corner of Sumpter Yard and Holywell Hill at 3 pm on Sunday 9th August, exactly 75 years since the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki. (Hiroshima had been bombed three days previously.) We will then visit the Abbey's Black Lives Matter installation in the North Transept and then, if the weather is good, adjourn to the park for a sandwich. Everyone is welcome. Please bring your own sandwich. If you wish to have lunch beforehand, the Abbey's Abbot's Kitchen serves BBQ Burgers in the Abbey Orchard from 11.30 am to 2.30 pm every Saturday and Sunday.

Saint Clare (1193/4 - 1253) Feast 11 August Clare was born at Assisi and left home at the age of 18 and, under St Francis's guidance, began a community that grew to become the order of the Poor Clares (she was later joined both by her sister and by her widowed mother). In its radical attachment to poverty, the Rule of the order was much more severe than that of any other order of nuns. In 1215, Clare obtained from the Pope the privilege of owning nothing, so that the nuns of her order were to be sustained only by alms. Such a Rule was both a challenge to established structures and a risk to those who followed it, and successive Popes tried to modify it. In 1247, Pope Innocent IV promulgated a new Rule that allowed the ownership of communal property: Clare rewrote it. A later attempt at mitigation in 1263 partly succeeded (perhaps because Clare had already died): some communities following the old rule and some the new. Clare was a noted contemplative and a caring mother to her nuns. She died at Assisi in 1253. St Clare was designated as the patron saint of television in 1958 by Pope Pius XII, because when she was very ill, she could not attend mass but was reportedly able to see and hear it on the wall in her room. She is also the patroness of eye disease, goldsmiths and laundry.