



Church Website

NEWS BULLETIN - ST ALBAN & ST STEPHEN

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 13 DECEMBER 2020



VirginMoneyGiving

Parish Team: Fr Michael O'Boy (Parish Priest) Fr Julian Davies (Assistant Priest)

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We are a Fairtrade parish

Fr Michael Writes...As you will be aware from last week's newsletter there will be no Vigil or Christmas Day Masses celebrated in public at St Alban and St Stephen this coming Christmas. There will however be three streamed Masses and opportunities to visit the crib (**please see details later in this newsletter**). Also our annual Carols by Candlelight will be streamed on Tuesday 22 December. Mindful that the offering on Christmas Day is traditionally for the priests of the parish, and that there was no Easter Offering either, several parishioners have asked how we are to be 'paid'. So, I thought it would be helpful to be clear on how these matters work in general, as well as at this particular time.

Firstly, it is worth saying that priests are not treated as employees but as office holders and that we receive an allowance rather than a salary. It should also be noted that the arrangements for religious priests, and therefore the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart who served the parish until the end of August 2020, were different to those for Diocesan Clergy. Currently the Diocese recommends an annual allowance of £9,900 which the priests receive in monthly instalments. This is what Fr Julian and I currently receive. The parish funds these monthly instalments out of the monies received on Easter Day and Christmas Day as well as the offerings or 'stole' fees received for Mass intentions, baptisms, funerals and weddings. Where the income from these different sources does not cover the priest or priests allowance, the Diocese allows for the shortfall to be made up from general parish funds that come from the ordinary weekly offertory. Where the income from these sources is greater than that needed to cover the recommended allowance the parish priest can request that the priest allowance be increased. If no such request is made the surplus currently remains in and positively augments parish funds.

To be clear, it should be added that the parish provides for the priests' board, lodging, utilities as well as national insurance contributions, and, if the priest has opted into it, membership of the Diocesan Health Scheme. This expenditure is funded from the regular weekly income. As with his monthly allowance, a priest is taxed on these things because they constitute a benefit in kind. Similarly, any personal 'domestic' work undertaken for him by an employee (cooking and cleaning) is also treated as a benefit in kind, for which a monetary value is established and the relevant tax payable. Finally, parish clergy in Westminster are expected to provide and cover all the associated running costs of any car they may have, but can claim mileage for any pastoral related travel.

In 2020 Mass intentions, funerals, baptisms and weddings have so far provided an income of just over £17,000 to support the clergy allowance which, for the eleven months until the end of November, totals £18,150. As you might imagine, the offerings received over the Christmas period make a significant contribution to funding the clergy allowance.

I hope you will understand my writing in this way. In response to people's questions I wish to be transparent about the way in which the clergy allowance operates: what it is, what it covers and how it is funded. If you wish to contribute to the Christmas Offering, the usual envelopes will be available from this weekend. Please return them using the metal box at the back of the Church or by posting them through the presbytery door.

Finally, each year the children from one of our two parish primary schools - St John Fisher or St Alban & St Stephen - are invited to illustrate the crib scene for our parish Christmas Card. This year it was the turn of Years 5 & 6 at St Alban & St Stephen. The winning entry and the runners up have been reproduced on a poster at the front of the Church. I would like to congratulate Francesca, our overall winner, as well as our runners up Mia, Martha, Millie, and Esther, and to thank all the children who took part. Please, when you are passing, take the time to have a look. Further details and copies of the winning illustrations are also on our website.

Fr Michael

LITURGY AND SACRAMENTS

The God Who Speaks - Sunday Meditations John the Baptist appears in today's readings with a specific mission: to bear witness to Jesus, the Light. Given the current situation of uncertainty, many might think they are in darkness. We are called, by being who we are, to point to Jesus, light of the world. Christ is the Light. Make sure that at your times of prayer or in your "prayer corner", you light a candle representing Jesus, the Light of the world coming to us.

Adoration and Compline At 10pm from Thursday 17 to Wednesday 23 December, Adoration will be streamed for ten minutes followed by Compline, the last office of the day.

Crib Meditation On Sunday 20 December at 4pm Fr Julian will lead a meditation on the assembling of the crib.

Baptisms Please contact Fr Julian for baptism enquiries at juliandavies@rcdow.org.uk. Congratulations to Amy and Oliver who were baptized recently.

First Holy Communion & Confirmation 2021 Parents and guardians for those due to celebrate their First Holy Communion (Year 3 and above) and Confirmation (Year 10 and above) next year are invited to register [online](#) via the website. *Please note that if your son or daughter was a part of last year's programme but has yet to receive Holy Communion or be Confirmed, there is no need to register again.*

Sacrament of Reconciliation If you are in need of confession, please contact the Presbytery. Confessions will be held in the open air and observe social distancing.

Marriage Congratulations to Rebecca O'Connor and Thomas Wilmot who were married here last weekend.

Anointing of the Sick Current restrictions allow for end of life care, so those who are dangerously ill can be anointed at home or while in residential care (should the care or nursing home permit). Currently we are not allowed into Watford General Hospital. If somebody is admitted into hospital, and they wish to be visited or anointed please contact the hospital chaplaincy. Where the person is incapacitated, the request needs to come from their next of kin. The number for Watford General is 01923 244366.

Arrangements for booking places at Masses Advance booking is not necessary for weekday masses, except Friday evening. Advance booking is needed for Friday evening and for weekend masses. Stewards will still need to take the names and contact details of those attending weekday masses for contact tracing purposes. To book a place for Friday evening or weekend masses, please contact the parish office [during office hours](#) on 01727 853585 or at stalbins@rcdow.org.uk. Please note that bookings can only be made from Monday for the following weekend.

PARISH LIFE

Knights of St Columba Christmas posters These are now available in the Church Porch. Please take one home to put in a window.

Christmas Cards An electronic version of the Parish Christmas card will be sent to everyone on the parish mailing list. A limited number of hard copies are available in the Church porch to takeaway and give to anyone who would like one but is unable to access the electronic copy.

Advent Talks: Towards Christmas and Beyond The final of this year's Advent talks, entitled, 'Windows: Within & Without' will be given by Fr Julian and will be streamed at 8pm on Monday 14 December, with an opportunity for questions afterwards. The immediate aim of the series is to reflect on our current situation, through the lens of the Christmas story, but it is also hoped that the talks will stimulate our preparation for next year's Parish Assembly and the formation of our pastoral priorities. Please [click here](#) for a link to the livestream page which you can also access via the website.

Christmas Day Takeaway Lunch Invitation If you, or someone you know, wishes to receive a Christmas Day lunch delivered to your home, please contact David on 07543 400650 or by emailing dave_markham@yahoo.co.uk by 7 December.

Christmas Day Lunch - call for help! We have a cook, but help would be appreciated to plate up food, to wash up afterwards and for drivers to deliver the meals please. Drivers must be DBS checked. If you would like to help, or offer lifts, please contact David on 07543 400650 or email dave_markham@yahoo.co.uk.

Knit and Natter in Lockdown The Parish Friends Knit and Natter group are delighted to have gained several new knitters over the past months. Members have been busy making squares that have been made into blankets, several of which have gone to local care homes. We have also been making scarves and jumpers for Br Johannes who is developing a new project in London for Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugees. We will continue to knit for these refugees and would like to include men's hats if we can find volunteers to make them. We have also been asked to knit twiddle muffs for care home patients with dementia. If you can knit, have any good wool to contribute or would like to help in any way please let me know. Contact Helen on 07860 830340 or via the parish office.

CAFOD World Gifts CAFOD's range of virtual gifts make a real difference to families living in poverty across the world. While we have the coronavirus pandemic here, we can still be good neighbours to our sisters and brothers overseas by giving World Gifts as Christmas presents to family and friends.

Let's spread joy and hope around the world this Christmas. Visit [Cafod](#) or take one of the physical brochures at the back of the Church.

Traidcraft There is still time to order gifts and Christmas cards from Traidcraft. If you would like a gift catalogue, please contact Maureen - grabecki@hotmail.com, 765549. You will find items online at [Traidcraft](#). If you order via the parish, 10% of the order price will go to CAFOD.

Churches Together As last year, we are joining Churches Together in St. Albans in sending Christmas cards to people in prison.

Communications Do you have an interest in how we as a parish community communicate, not only among ourselves, but with the world at large? Do you have skills and experience that may help? Would you like to be part of a Parish Communications Group? Would you be willing to join a communication strategy group? If so, please email Fr Michael at michaeloboy@rcdow.org.uk.

Virgin Money Giving If you would like to donate to the parish using Virgin Money Giving, please click [here](#) or use the QR code at the top of the newsletter.

Contactless Giving Point A contactless giving point is now located in the Church porch. To make an offering using contactless giving select the amount you wish to donate and tap the top of the machine with your mobile phone or card.

Standing Orders We would ask you to consider making your offertory contribution by standing order if you do not already do so. In addition, if you would like to gift aid your donations, but have not yet completed a gift aid form, please consider doing so. Details of how to set up a standing order or complete a gift aid form can be found by clicking the 'Donate to the Parish' button on the home page of the [website](#) or by contacting the Parish Office. In 2019 we received on average £6,788.05 a month in standing orders. Between January and March this year, the average monthly total was £6,724.25. By June this had increased to £7,765.14 and, in October, it stood at £9,044.80. Thank you to those who have traditionally given via standing order and to those who have set them up more recently.

SCHOOLS & WIDER COMMUNITY

St. Alban and Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery invite you to join us at our virtual open morning on Tuesday 15 December at 9.30am. If you are interested, please email admin@ssas.herts.sch.uk.

Certificates of Catholic Practice for Primary and Secondary School Admissions Fr Michael will be available at the Presbytery on Monday 11th January 4-6pm. No appointment is required and forms will be provided by Fr Michael. It is not necessary for your child to be present.

Mary's Meals "Double the Love" Appeal Until 31 January donations made will be matched by a funder, up to a total donation value of £2 million. So now, for just £7.95 (£6.36 if gift-aided), we can feed a child at school, in one of the world's poorest countries, every day for a year. Please donate via www.marysmeals.org.uk.

Right to Life UK Yesterday we celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of the unborn. We ask for her guidance and inspiration as we the church seek to support all pregnant mothers through their pregnancies, and that we become models of support to all in society.

MASSES DURING THE CHRISTMAS OCTAVE

Streamed Masses This year, we will not be celebrating public Masses in church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Instead, the following three masses will be livestreamed and you are invited to participate from home:

- 5pm on Christmas Eve
- 11pm on Christmas Eve
- 9am on Christmas Morning

Please see the homepage of the Parish [website](#) for access to our livestreams or click [here](#). Leaflets to accompany each service, and to facilitate your participation at home, will be available on the parish website.

Prayer at the Crib On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day the Church will be open for individuals and families to pray at the crib between 6.30pm and 9.30pm on Christmas Eve and again on Christmas Day between 10am and 1pm. No booking is needed.

Other Masses during the Christmas Octave are as follows:

- St Stephen's Day, Saturday 26 December - morning Mass at 11am and a Vigil Mass for the Solemnity of the Holy Family at 6pm (advance booking required for evening Vigil Mass)
- Sunday 27 December - Masses at 9.30am, 11.30am and 7pm (advance booking required for each Mass)
- Monday 28 December through to Thursday 31 December - 10am Mass each morning, with evening Mass at 7pm on Wednesday 30 December (no advance booking is required)
- New Year's Day, Friday 1 January - Masses at 10 am and 7pm (advance booking required for both masses)

Please contact the parish office between now and 1pm on 23 December to reserve a place for masses where advance booking is required. Further details about Christmas arrangements can be found on the parish [website](#).

Carols by Candlelight will be streamed on Tuesday 22 December at 7.30pm.

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday 13 December - THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (Gaudete Sunday)

6pm Vigil Mass Mickie Clancy (Ann)
9.30am Mass Pat Judge & Caroline Fagen (Ann)
11.30am Mass Angela Anzalone (Ann)
7pm Mass People of the Parish
Reading 1, Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11,
Responsorial Psalm, Luke 1
Reading 2, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
Gospel, John 1:6-8, 19-28

Monday 14 December - St John of the Cross

10am Mass Ann Plummer (Ints)
7 m Mass Mary Curran (RIP)
Reading 1, Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17
Responsorial Psalm, 25, Gospel, Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday 15 December - Advent FERIA

10am Mass Nora Doran (Ann)
Reading 1, Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
Responsorial Psalm, 34, Gospel, Matthew 21:28-32

Wednesday 16 December - Advent feria

10 am Mass Karen Brennan (RIP)
7pm Mass Donald De Cruz (Ann)
Reading 1, Isaiah 45:6-8,18,21-25
Responsorial Psalm, 85, Gospel, Luke 7:19-23

Thursday 17 December - Advent FERIA

10am Mass Ross Brinkert (RIP)
Reading 1, Genesis 49:2,8-10
Responsorial Psalm, 72, Gospel, Matthew 1:1-17

Friday 18 December Advent FERIA

10am Mass Elaine Gatta (RIP)
7pm Mass Maureen & Eddie Lavelle (Ints)
Reading 1, Jeremiah 23:5-8
Responsorial Psalm, 72, Gospel, Matthew 1:18-24

Saturday 19 December Advent FERIA

Reading 1, Judges 13:2-7,24-25
Responsorial Psalm, 71, Gospel, Luke 1:5-25

Sunday 20 December - FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

6pm Vigil Mass People of the Parish
9.30am Mass Dorothy Snaith (Ann)
11.30am Mass Laurie & Mary Blythman (Ann)
7pm Mass Graham Smith (RIP)

PLEASE PRAY

Together with Churches together in St Albans, this week we pray for the Minister and members of the St Mary's Church Childwick.

For those suffering with Coronavirus and for all the Sick including

For those who have died recently including John Hully, Ken Wilkinson, Jimmy Hopper and Anthony Kane

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time including Tony O'Brien, Mickie Clancy, Pat Judge & Caroline Fagen, Angela Anzalone, Nora Doran, Donald De Cruz, Dorothy Snaith and Larie & Mary Blythman.

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

'Liturgy of the Word for Children' online You can download this week's leaflet and an advent activity sheet for children from our website, under [Groups - Liturgy](#) or from the Diocese of Westminster [website](#), where you will also find other useful Advent resources for children and families.

Fr Tom Hewitt MSC in 2019, when parishioners made donations to fund a bench in Fr Tom's memory, nearly £2,500 was raised. The new bench cost just under £500 leaving nearly £2,000 unspent. The suggestion at a recent Parish Pastoral Council was to donate the remaining amount to a charity which Fr Tom would have supported. Fr Tom will be remembered fondly for a good many years ahead so my intention is to keep £750 for a future refurbishment of the bench. However, Fr Tom was greatly involved with our parish SVP. Since we have had no collection for the SVP this year I propose to donate what remains to our SVP, specifically for the families they have traditionally supported at Christmas. If you made a donation towards Fr Tom's bench and are not happy for the remaining funds to be used in this way, please contact me. Fr Michael.

Volunteer Stewards needed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for Visits to the Crib

We need more volunteers to steward when the church will be open for visits to the Crib on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If you are available to steward at any of the times below please email Melanie at mjoneill5@btinternet.com

- Christmas Eve 8pm to 9.30pm
- Christmas Day 10am to 11.30am
- Christmas Day 11.30am to 1pm

We have almost enough volunteers for opening on Christmas Eve 6.30pm to 8pm. Thank you very much to those who have already volunteered.