



Church Website

NEWS BULLETIN - ST ALBAN & ST STEPHEN

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT 20 DECEMBER 2020



VirginMoneyGiving

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

Rev. Steve Pickard (Deacon) Mrs Angela Gray (Parish Administrator)

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We are a Fairtrade parish

Fr Julian writes...

Before this week is out we will have celebrated Christmas Day. Think of those living in regimes where they do not have the freedom to do so. Think also of a time in this country's history when the government abolished it. Miserable lot. Of course the true spirit of Christmas cannot be confined to one day. If we know the reason for the season, then everyday can be a Christmas Day! Oh no, some of you are thinking, one day is enough. Might that be because we have missed the heart of it all which is in the simplicity of the Saviour's birth and the message of hope and salvation that it brings. Let us not think that the horrid virus is like the Grinch who stole Christmas, or that the current restrictions mean that we can't celebrate the twelve days. I take great pleasure in greeting people with 'Happy Christmas' around New Year's Day and I have challenged a prominent store to explain why they were taking down their decorations on Christmas Eve.

Why should we feel passionate about Christmas? After all the spindles of the Christmas tree will eventually fall and what remains will look like an acid rain attack. With a bit of wilful maltreatment, with a sharp instrument, it will make quite a good cross for Good Friday. Even if the manger is not from the same wood as the tree of Calvary, Jesus' swaddling clothes bear a striking similarity to his burial shroud. In his song, Thorns in the Straw, Grahame Kendrick draws out the close connection between Jesus' birth and death, by asking of Mary, 'And did she see there in the straw, by his head, a thorn, and did she smell myrrh in the air on that starry night?' Mary had total freedom to go along with the divine plan that Gabriel announced to her, save in one respect. That was the name of the child. 'You must call him Jesus'. Joseph independently was told the same. 'You are to give him the name Jesus'. Why? Jesus means The Saviour. 'For he will save his people from their sins'.

Unlike no other child, this child was born for one purpose only. The blood red berries of the holly say it all. God's rescue package. His way of changing you and me, and the entire human race and the whole of creation from the inside out. What a gift! What Love! Fr Michael, Deacon Steve and I wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

The God Who Speaks - Sunday Meditations

Fourth Sunday of Advent:

Meditate - The angel of the Lord brought Good News to Mary as he does to us "the Lord is with you". As we finish this year, we might think that God has forgotten us or perhaps he has been busy with other things. The God who became man through Mary has committed his life to ours, never to let us go. Now we need to look for him, perhaps in a different Christmas to the ones we are used to.

Act - Prompted by the angel's words, Mary went to visit her cousin; perhaps at this Christmas time you might contact some relation, neighbour or friend, or even visit them, if it is safe to do so.

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph:

Meditate - This Gospel recounts an encounter: the meeting of two couples, a young couple with an old couple; a baby with some elderly people. Whereas the Joseph and Mary must have been a bit perplexed, we are told about the reaction of the old people: one praises God because he sees what he has been waiting for all his life; the other tells others of this Child. In this story, what character are you? What is your reaction to meeting Jesus?

Act - Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, tells everyone about the child she had met. Perhaps you could think of a friend, relation, or neighbour, to whom you could tell what the true meaning of Christmas is.

LITURGY AND SACRAMENTS

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.

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.

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 (01923 244366) If somebody is admitted to hospital, and wishes to be visited or anointed please contact the hospital chaplaincy. Where the person is incapacitated, the request must come from their next of kin.

Knights of St Columba Christmas posters These are now available in the Church Porch. Please take and display one.

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

PARISH LIFE

St Albans Homeless If your New Year's resolution will be to serve God by helping others then please consider volunteering to help the St Albans Winter Beds Project provide accommodation to the City's homeless. Due to Covid the project is adopting a new approach this year and is working with Emmaus to provide four accommodation cabins at the Emmaus site. Volunteers are required to fill short shifts in the evening (8.30-10.30pm) and morning (7.30-9.00am). Roles include preparing cabins, greeting guests, handing over to night staff and clearing and cleaning cabins. Training will be provided. Even one shift a month (Jan-March) would help. Please email [here](#) for information.

Donating to our Parish Please see our [website](#) or click [here](#) for ways in which you can donate to the parish. In light of the current restrictions, your donations matter more than ever. Thanks you for your continued generosity.

Today is Sea Sunday, when the Church prays for all those who live and work at sea. Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) is the Catholic Church's official maritime welfare agency and supports seafarers both practically and spiritually. For an appeal talk and video about our work, please visit our [website](#). To donate, please click [here](#) or text 'SEA' to 70460 to donate £5. Thank you.

Crib Offering to the Catholic Children's Society (CCS) Since March the CCS has provided emergency food and essentials, as well as mental health services, for over five and a half thousand children and their parents/carers. These families have faced desperate situations due to the Coronavirus. There are many more families in need of support and our parish will be donating our Crib Offering to support this important work. Due to Covid, a special page has been set up at www.cathchild.org.uk/crib where you can also make a donation.

Parish Pastoral Council Please [click here](#) for a report from the latest PPC meeting. The next meeting is on 13 January.

SCHOOLS & WIDER COMMUNITY

Certificates of Catholic Practice for Primary and Secondary School Admissions Fr Michael will be available at the Presbytery on Monday 11 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.

PAX CRISTI INTERNATIONAL The following extracts are from the recent annual Pax Christi Advent Peace Service with online participants from across the globe:

- Young people in Afghanistan working for Peace said, "We dream of non-violent relationships."
- "How important it is to dream together," read an extract from "Fratelli Tutti", Pope Francis' recent letter on fraternity and social friendship.
- "Let us forge bonds of unity, common projects and shared dreams," was one prayer.
- From an adapted Indonesian creed, "I do not believe that war and hunger are inevitable and peace unattainable."
- From CAFOD, "We are one people, many nations, building hope through steps for peace."

SVP Vinnie Packs The St Vincent de Paul Society have assembled and distributed nearly 12,000 packs for the homeless. Each pack contains a thermal hat and gloves, two pairs of thermal socks, toothpaste, toothbrush, wet wipes, Pavement magazine, pen and information sheet and 5,000 packs include a reusable face mask. The contents of each Vinnie Pack cost around £3.50 and donations to sponsor packs would be most welcome. Please donate [online](#) or by sending a cheque (made payable to SVP) to Vinnie Packs, PO Box 72264, London SW1P 9EZ. Any assistance is appreciated.

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

We need more volunteers to steward when the church is open for visits to the Crib on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If you are available at any of the times below please email Melanie at mjoneill5@btinternet.com. Thank you very much to those who have already volunteered.

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

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 booking)
- 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 livestreamed on Tuesday 22 December at 7.30pm.

'Liturgy of the Word for Children' online You can download this week's leaflet and advent activity sheet from our website, under [Groups - Liturgy](#) or from the Diocese of Westminster [website](#).

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday 20 December - 4TH 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)
Reading 1, 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-16, Responsorial Psalm, 89
Reading 2, 1 Romans 16: 25-27, Gospel, Luke 1:26-38

Monday 21 December - Advent Feria

10am Mass Margaret Sweeney (RIP)
7pm Mass Pascale Al-Basri (Ann)
Reading 1, Song of Songs 2:8-14
Responsorial Psalm, 33, Gospel, Luke 1:39-45

Tuesday 22 December - Advent Feria

10am Mass Edward Caldeira (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 Samuel 1:24-28
Responsorial Psalm, 1 Samuel, Gospel, Luke 1:46-56

Wednesday 23 December - Advent feria

10 am Mass Cliff Staniforth (Ann)
7pm Mass Holy Souls
Reading 1, Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Responsorial Psalm, 25, Gospel, Luke 1:57-66

Thursday 24 December - Advent Feria

10am Mass Roger Moore Rangasamy (RIP) & Marie Noella Amadis (RIP)
Reading 1, 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11,16
Responsorial Psalm 89, Gospel, Luke 1:67-79
5pm Family Mass for Christmas - People of the Parish
Reading 1, Isaiah 62:1-5, Responsorial Psalm, 89
Reading 2, Acts 13:16-17, 22-25, Gospel, Matthew 1:1-25
11pm Mass during the Night - People of the Parish
Reading 1, Isaiah 9:1-7, Responsorial Psalm, 96
Reading 2, Titus 2:11-14, Gospel, Luke 2:1-14

Friday 25 December - THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

9am Mass Fr Tom Hewitt MSC (Ann)
Reading 1, Isaiah 52:7-10, Responsorial Psalm, 98
Reading 2, Hebrews 1:1-6, Gospel, John 1:1-18

Saturday 26 December - St Stephen

11am Mass Carmela Sellicchia (Ann)
Reading 1, Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59
Responsorial Psalm, 31, Gospel, Matthew 10:17-22

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

Arrangements for booking places at Masses Advance booking is only needed for Friday evening and weekend masses. Stewards 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 stalbans@rcdow.org.uk. Please note that bookings can only be made from Monday for the following weekend.

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday 27 December - THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

6pm Vigil Mass Alec Anderson
9.30am Mass People of the Parish
11.30am Mass Malcolm Lewis (RIP)
7pm Mass Raymond Bagge (Ann)
Reading 1, Genesis 15:1-6, 21:1-3
Responsorial Psalm, 128, Reading 2, Colossians: 3:12-21
Gospel, Luke 2:22-40

Monday 28 December - THE HOLY INNOCENTS

10am Mass Benny Eardley (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 John 1:5-2:2
Responsorial Psalm, 124, Gospel, Matthew 2:13-18

Tuesday 29 December - ST THOMAS BECKET

10am Mass Nigel Appleyard (RIP)
Reading 1, Colossians 1:24-29
Responsorial Psalm, 23, Gospel, Luke 22:24-30

Wednesday 30 December - SIXTH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

10 am Mass Christina Conefrey (RIP)
7pm Mass Fr Jack Kennedy (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 John 2:12-17
Responsorial Psalm, 96, Gospel, Luke 2:36-40

Thursday 31 December - SEVENTH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

10am Mass Tony Moran (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 John 2:18-21
Responsorial Psalm, 96, Gospel, John 1:1-18

Friday 1 January - SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

10am Mass Antonetta Caldeira & Selwyn Caldeira (RIP)
7pm Mass Holy Souls
Reading 1, Numbers 6:22-27, Responsorial Psalm, 67
Reading 2, Galatians 4:4-7, Gospel, Luke 2:16-21

Saturday 2 January - Ss Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen

Reading 1, 1 John 2:22-28
Responsorial Psalm, 98, Gospel, John 1:19-28

Together with Churches together in St Albans, this week we pray for all the members of Churches together in St Albans.

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday 3 January - SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY

6pm Vigil Mass Alexander Vengler (Ann)
9.30am Mass People of the Parish
11.30am Mass Diane Keane (Ann)
7pm Mass Deceased members of the Sheehan and Guinnelly families (RIP)
Reading 1, Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2, 8-12
Responsorial Psalm, 147,
Reading 2, Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18, Gospel, John 1:1-18

Monday 4 January - Christmas feria

10am Mass Margaret Sweeney (RIP)
7pm Mass Maureen Lerwill (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 John 3:7-10
Responsorial Psalm, 98, Gospel, John 1:35-42

Tuesday 5 January - Christmas Feria

10am Mass Margaret Meehan (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 John 3:11-21
Responsorial Psalm, 100, Gospel, John 1:43-51

Wednesday 6 January - THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

10am Mass Annie Coakley (RIP)
7pm Mass People of the Parish
Reading 1, Isaiah 60:1-6, Responsorial Psalm, 72
Reading 2, Ephesians 3:2-6, Gospel, Matthew 2:1-12

Thursday 7 January - Christmas feria

10am Mass Stan Penstone (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 John 3:22-4:6
Responsorial Psalm, 2, Gospel, Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Friday 8 January - Christmas feria

10am Mass Noreen Carolan (RIP)
7pm Mass Thomas McGovern (Ann)
Reading 1, 1 John 4:7-10
Responsorial Psalm, 72, Gospel, Mark 6:34-44

Saturday 9 January - Christmas feria

6pm Mass Catherine Mannion (RIP)
Reading 1, 1 John 4:11-18
Responsorial Psalm, 72, Gospel, Mark 6:45-52

Together with Churches together in St Albans, this week we pray for all the members of St Stephens Church.

PLEASE PRAY

For those suffering with Coronavirus and for all the Sick including

For those who have died recently including Mary Gear (nee England).

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time including Dorothy Snaith, Laurie and Mary Bythman, Pascale Al-Basri, Cliff Staniforth, Fr Tom Hewitt MSC, Carmela Sellecchia, Raymond Bagge, Alexander Vengler, Diane Keane, Thomas McGovern and Robert O'Sullivan.

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