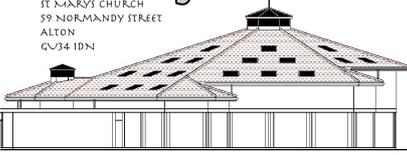


St Mary's Parish Newsletter



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MASS INTENTIONS

w/c Sunday 29th November, 2020

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Year (B) (Psalter Week 1)

Saturday	<i>Our Lady on Saturday</i> Names in the Book of the Dead
Sunday	<i>First Sunday of Advent</i> Amy & Len Gilbert, RIP
Monday	<i>St. Andrew—Apostle</i> Harold Carling, RIP
Tuesday	<i>Advent Feria</i> 9.30—10.30am PRIVATE PRAYER The People of The Parish
Wednesday	<i>Advent Feria</i> Edward Keogh, RIP
Thursday	<i>St. Francis Xavier</i> 9.30—10.30am PRIVATE PRAYER Henry James, RIP
Friday	<i>Advent Feria</i> Mary & Jack Lucas, RIP
Saturday	<i>Advent Feria</i> PUBLIC MASS 5.30pm <i>Johny, RIP</i>
Sunday	<i>Second Sunday of Advent</i> 11am PUBLIC MASS Amy & Len Gilbert, RIP
Confessions:	<i>Please email or call the Parish Office for an appointment</i>

**FOR PUBLIC MASSES, PLEASE RESUME
BOOKING BY EMAIL OR PHONE**

Marian Antiphon for Advent

Loving mother of the Redeemer,
gate of heaven, star of the sea,
assist your people who have fallen,
yet strive to rise again.

To the wonderment of nature
you bore your Creator,

Yet remained a virgin, after, as before.
You who received Gabriel's joyful greeting,
have pity on us poor sinners.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace
into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of
Christ your Son was made known by the message of
an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to
the glory of the Resurrection.

Through the same Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

A message from Fr. James

Following a recent Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishop's of England and Wales the following will apply this coming Christmas.

Like Easter the Nativity of the Lord is one of the two Solemnities of the Church's Liturgical Year that has its own Octave. The Church regards each day of the Octave as if it were the Solemnity itself. Despite having days within the Octave that are feasts—St. Stephen, John the Baptist, The Holy Innocents, The Holy family and concluding with the Solemnity of Mary The Mother of God—the Roman Missal states that they 'are a day within the Octave of Christmas' This means that Liturgically, each of the days from 25th December to the 1st of January is "Christmas Day".

Although the 'obligation' to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation is still suspended, I know that many people will wish to come to Mass at Christmas. However, as we are still restricted by COVID19 regulations, numbers will be limited—even if we are able to use the Hall for overflow.

I would like to suggest therefore that

- A) People think about which day within the Octave they might wish to attend Mass
- B) That out of consideration for others, please don't try to attend each day so as to allow as many as possible to attend.

Further details of Masses and numbers able to attend will be announced once we are advised which tier we will fall under and the affect it will have on numbers.

Please Note:

Until further guidance has been received from the Government and Diocese I am not able to take bookings for Christmas Day Masses. Also as Tracy, our Parish Administrator is working from home, I won't be able to take bookings for anything other than Christmas Day Masses as it will mean too many lists. Also on the Monday and Thursday after Christmas, I will be saying Mass for the Sisters in the communities of Anstey & Medstead.

It would also be helpful if we had some extra Stewards and if you are available over this period then please do get in touch

Yours in Christ,
Fr. James

First Sunday of Advent

In Advent, Christians relive a dual impulse of the spirit: on the one hand, they raise their eyes towards the final destination of their pilgrimage through history, which is the glorious return of the Lord Jesus; on the other, remembering with emotion his birth in Bethlehem, they kneel before the Crib. The hope of Christians is turned to the future but remains firmly rooted in an event of the past. In the fullness of time, the Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary: "Born of a woman, born under the law", as the Apostle Paul writes (Gal 4:4). We might say that Advent is the season in which Christians must rekindle in their hearts the hope that they will be able with God's help to renew the world (*Pope Benedict XVI*).

AN ADVENT MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PHILIP

Advent is a time of hope. It is a time when we joyfully prepare for Christmas. It is a time when we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas and when we renew our desire for His second coming at the end of time. True, Advent can be busy. There's food to order, gifts to buy, cards to send. But spiritually, what should we be doing during this Advent season? We should be praying to God for the theological gift of hope and the renewal of that gift in our lives. We often pray to God for deeper faith and deeper charity but how often do we pray for stronger hope, the hope that comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts?

Hope is essential to the Christian life. It's hope that gives us joy, energy, enthusiasm; it makes us smile; it puts a spring in our step; it assures us that with God the impossible can be possible, that obstacles can be overcome, that the gloom can be transformed into light. More, it is hope that enables us to glimpse the joy of our true home in heaven.

"Why are you cast down my soul? Hope in God; I will praise Him still, my Saviour and my God" (Psalm 41).

This Advent, let us pray for the gift of hope.

2020, this last year, has been like no other in living memory; our lives have changed forever. The corona virus pandemic has resulted in many lives being lost, in much sickness, suffering and hardship. Yet amidst the devastation, the Lord did not desert us. Indeed, He has been very much with us. We know that thanks to His victory on the Cross, 'nothing can come between us and the love of Christ' even if we have to suffer many trials (Rom 8: 31-39). It is thanks to God's grace that during the pandemic we have seen many acts of goodness and courage, a veritable rekindling of the commandment 'Love thy neighbour'. Many people have engaged in works of selfless generosity. I think especially of the key workers who have risked their own health in order to help protect, assist and support others in their need.

During this Year of the Word, I find joy in the beauty and poetry of the Advent readings, especially those from Prophet Isaiah. I cannot help but be lifted up - my heart rejoices - when I read and reflect on Isaiah's beautiful words. They were meant to give the Israelites encouragement in the midst of the struggles and difficulties of life. My wish is that during these Advent days, you too will take the time to listen and to reflect on these encouraging words of scripture, to allow them to take root in your own heart and mind. Sursum corda 'Lift up your hearts' is the invitation from the priest in every Mass.

May Isaiah lift you up and replenish you with God's gift of hope.

Here are four of my favourite verses from Prophet Isaiah. You could pick one for each week of Advent to add to your personal prayer and reflection.

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (Isaiah 11:1-2)

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God Every valley shall be lifted up And every mountain and hill be made low; The uneven ground shall become level And the rough places a plain; And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:3-5)

"He will tend his flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in his arms; He will carry them in his bosom And gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11)

I invite you to join me in keeping this holy season of Advent amidst all the chaos, and the crisis for the Lord is coming to save us.

In Corde Jesu

+ Philip

Please remember in your prayers

Adi Morando, Carol & Margaret Conway, Kate Cradock, Francesca Adams, Les Carter, Bill Wood, Brenda Gregory, Rita Rawling, Margaret Collins, Alex Smith, Lily Jones, Theresa Davies, Michael & Jo Rogers, Annie Tomlinson



Bishop Philip writes

Join me on an Advent Journey

What will you be doing this Advent?

I will pray for the gift of hope. In this way I will prepare myself to greet the infant Jesus and welcome God into my life this Christmas. Why hope? I hear you ask, because it is in these unprecedented times that I have remembered that it is by having hope in the future that I can find joy in the present. Hope gives me enthusiasm and energy to work to make a difference, because it is in hope I know that the Lord will come to save us.

A few days ago, I was joined at Bishops House by a local family so that together we could make an Advent wreath. We filmed the occasion so you too could learn how to make a wreath (a step by step guide is included in our Advent booklet) and the traditions and symbolism attached to them. Please do not think your wreath has to be just as we have made ours. You could make one out of anything that is safe.

So, this Advent, will you and your family be lighting an Advent wreath in your home? Will you commit to spiritually joining with me and many around our Diocese as together we offer our prayers? I really do hope so, to help us all I have made available an Advent booklet which contains Scripture Readings, prayers, and song for each day of Advent. The Advent booklet together with my film can be accessed on our Diocesan website by clicking here <https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/advent-project>

Daily Prayers for Advent—Week 1

Use these prayers to guide your reflections throughout the week.

Begin by making and praying the sign of the cross then lighting one purple candle. (*Remember to light the same candle as yesterday*). As you do so sing the Advent Hymn found on the back cover. This week sing the Chorus, Verse 1 and the Chorus.

Pray Jesus, you are light even in the darkest places. Help us to trust in you when we are lost or lonely. Shine hope into our hearts we pray. Amen.

Read Romans 15:13. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray the Lords Prayer, Our Father

Then offer prayers of intercession

Lord, this is such a busy time, we have much to do preparing to celebrate Christmas and observing all the rules around Covid-19 we are not sure how we will be ready for the day of your coming. Help us to see what is important: to be who you want us to be, and to do what you would have us do.

Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

Final Prayer Jesus, as we wait for your coming, help us not to be afraid and to trust in you. As we gather round this candle, we remember that you bring the light of hope into our lives. May your Word be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts? Amen.

Conclude by either singing a Chorus of our Advent Hymn, or the Hymn - O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, which can be found on YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v+qcIIZpnZPgo>

Waiting for The Lord

*Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
The resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
With righteous deeds at his coming,
So that, gathered at his right hand,
They may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.*

As we begin another liturgical year, we focus on the coming of Christ.

We wait for his coming in our own lives; we wait for his coming at Christmas; and we await his second coming.

In the First Reading, the exiles, freshly returned from Babylon, plead with God to return to them to help them rebuild their land. They are weary with waiting for him. The psalmist too pleads with God, 'the shepherd of Israel', to come once again to help, protect and show his power.

In the opening words of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul thanks God for all the graces they have received. He is confident that God will keep them faithful while they wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to be fully revealed (Second Reading).

In the Gospel, Jesus clearly warns his disciples to stay awake, to be on their guard, to be like the doorkeeper ... ever alert, because he does not know when his master will return.

Let us enter this new season with confidence, knowing that the Lord will give us, and our world, the graces we need, because 'God is faithful'.

O Lord rouse up your might, O Lord, come to our help. Psalm

God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ. Second Reading

Stay awake! Gospel

Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour and give us the strength to grow in love,

that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

Isaiah 63: 16-17; 64: 1, 3-8; Psalm 79 (80);

1 Corinthians 1: 3-9; Mark 13: 33-37

PRAYER WHEN UNABLE TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

*Lord Jesus Christ,
you know how we long to savour your sweetness in
Holy Communion,
and yet this is a time of fast.
Help us to remember that in the fast
which you undertook in the wilderness for the good of the
world,
you remained full of confidence in your Father's love,
unflinching in the mission you had received,
and unfailingly thankful for the presence of the Holy Spirit.
Fill us in the same way,
that in this present hour
we may not lose our sense of hope and gratitude,
so that when this time of fast comes to an end
we may truly say with ever greater joy:
"Taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed are they who put their trust in him".
(written by one of our own Diocesan Priests)*

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

With Christmas fast approaching our thoughts turn to those who are housebound for various reasons—perhaps unable to get out of the house for mobility or health reasons, or as is the case with many, shielding or self isolating.

For many, Christmas is a joyous occasion but for others it can be a very lonely time of year.

We would like to reach as many of those people as possible over the weeks before Christmas, assuring them that they are still very much in the thoughts and prayers of the Parish and perhaps offer a small gift and card.

If by chance you know of someone who you think would benefit from this, even if only to bring a momentary smile to their face, then please do contact us so that we can ensure they are included. GDPR makes life quite difficult at times as we are unable to give out addresses, unless we have the permission from that person.

Some of the Parish Team would be able and willing to take these gifts to those nominated, if they already know them, but if you are suggesting someone who the team perhaps don't know—would you be prepared to drop the gift to them ?

Please let us have your nominations as soon as possible so that we can begin to organise delivery.



If anyone would like to donate some luxury biscuits or a bar of chocolate then we would be most grateful.

Any donations can be left in the Hippo Box (Green Metal Bin) next to the doors into the Presbytery .

PARISH CENSUS

Over the past weeks, everyone listed in the Parish Register has received either an email or a letter assuring you of my prayers.

This seemed a good time to ensure that we have the correct details for those listed and hoped that we would reach anyone new to the Parish who may not have registered.

Of those listed in the Parish Register there are still well over 300 people who have not yet replied. Even if you details have not changed, please do return your form (or email us) so that we know your details are current.

If you have not received any contact from me then please do get in touch.

*Yours in Christ
Fr. James*

TRACK & TRACE

The government has launched a new system to aid the Track and Trace process. Places of worship are on the list of those venues that would benefit from its use.

There is a **Q Code poster** displayed on the inner Church Doors. If you have the NHS App please scan the Q Code on the way into the Church and register our details with the Track and Trace programme.

For those who do not have access to the App., details will need to be taken as previously upon your arrival

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

The Bishop announces an upcoming online survey of the people of our parishes to find out what they think of the Church in this Diocese of Portsmouth, what they value and what they believe would improve things.

In any earthly organization, it's important to know what people think, what they value, what they find difficult and what they think would improve things. So too and even more so within the Lord's flock.

As your Bishop, I'd like to know better what you think – you, the people and parishioners of our Diocese, the Lord's missionary disciples.

Over the last twelve months, we consulted our priests and deacons about what they think works and what doesn't work, what needs improvement and what might be let go of. Now it's your turn – our laity and faithful, the people of the Diocese of Portsmouth! I want to ask your opinion on how to improve our missionary reach, to hear your feedback, suggestions and ideas, to listen to whatever you think would improve the spiritual life of our parishes and schools, to know about your own love for the Lord, to identify whatever needs affirming or changing, and anything else that can help us all grow in holiness and faith.

The aim is to take communal responsibility for the mission of the Diocese and to ensure our Vicariate Framework teams are focused on serving real needs. It will be enormously helpful. So, I would dearly like to hear your voice.

Over the coming weeks leading up to Christmas and into the New Year, we will be running an online Questionnaire. I will give more details next week, plus the link to the Questionnaire. In advance, thank you for your help. May the Lord bless us all.

Flowers for the Church

Again, I would like to thank the flower ladies for their dedication in keeping our Church adorned with floral displays throughout the past months.

To allow them a little more freedom through Advent & Christmas we will be making collection envelopes available in the Church. If you would like to make a donation, please place it in an envelope and post in one of the collection boxes or through the Presbytery letter box.

Please ensure that if you are writing a cheque it is made payable to **P.R.C.D.T.R. Alton St. Mary.** You can also make a direct bank transfer and if you would like our bank details, please email the Secretary.