



PARISH OF WOOLHAMPTON

Diocese of Portsmouth - Served by the Benedictine Monks of Douai Abbey

www.douaiparish.org.uk

Douai Abbey and St Mary's, RG7 5TQ

St Bernadette's, Pangbourne RG8 7JL St Luke's, Theale RG7 5AS

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8 DECEMBER 2024

2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT – YEAR C

Bar 5:1-9

God means to show your splendour to every nation.

Psalm 125 Response

What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad.

Phil 1:4-6, 8-11

Be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

Luke 3:1-6

All mankind shall see the salvation of God.

THIS WEEK

Saturday 7 December

St Luke's

5.30pm

(Mass Intention: Vince Herbert, RIP)

Sunday 8 December

St Bernadette's

9.45am

(Mass Intention: People of the Parish)

Abbey Church

10.30am

(Mass Intention: Br Daniel Rowlands)

Mon 9 December

***Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary***

Abbey Church

11.30am

Tues 10 – Sat 14 Dec

Abbey Church

7.45am

All are welcome to daily services in Douai Abbey Church:

6.20am Morning Office (Matins & Lauds)

12.45pm Midday Prayer

6.00pm Vespers 8.00pm Compline

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions)

Abbey Church: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 6.30pm -7.00pm

St Luke's: Saturday 4.45pm – 5.15pm

St Bernadette's: Sunday 9.00am – 9.30am

Please pray for the sick and housebound of our parish:

Monica Adams · Bill Bateman · Patricia Brennismeyer · Pat Campbell · Luke Conlon · Mary Cox · Kevin McCormack · Marigold Norman · Babs O'Sullivan · Mary Overington · Barbara Stocker · Also Don Hood, Fr Alban's father.

Please pray for those who have died recently, especially Giles Caiger-Smith and David Marshall, and keep their loved ones in prayer.

MESSAGE FROM FR ALBAN

Dear Parishioners,

This year, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Lady has been moved to Monday, 9th December. There will be Mass in the Abbey Church on Monday at 11.30am to which all are welcome.

Confessions will be heard before Mass at St Luke's on Saturday 7th December and after Mass at St Bernadette's on Sunday 15th December. The Penitential Service for our Pastoral Area takes place on Tuesday 17th December at 7.30pm at St Joseph's, Newbury. I am also available to hear Confessions at other times. Requests should be directed to me using the parish priest's email above.

As you know, we have a new Parish Charity, the Rainbow Trust, which supports families who have children who are seriously ill. Please support our Christmas raffle by buying tickets after Mass this weekend. The raffle will be drawn next Sunday, 15th December. I wish to thank Graham and Mary Hodge, and John Williams, who have agreed to be members of the Steering Group for our parish charity. It would be good to also have parishioners to serve on this group who attend Mass at St Luke's. Please contact the Parish Office if you are willing to participate.

Over the past few months, the local news has been full of complaints about potholes in our roads damaging the wheels and tyres of our vehicles. In many places the roads are almost blocked by floods and debris.

In today's Gospel John the Baptist uses image of the road to show how we can either encourage or impede God's entrance into our lives. He proclaims "winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth." We know that it is not God's roads and paths that need to be made straight and smoothed out, but ours. In this period before Christmas the Church encourages us to prepare a way for the Lord in our hearts – to fill in those potholes created by our sins and to clear away the debris that block the Lord's path so that our hearts may be ready once again to welcome Him at Christmas.

Each Sunday during Advent we light a different candle on our Advent wreath in the sanctuary. Just as we have four candles in the Advent wreath, there are also four “rings” of Advent: Prepa-ring, clea-ring, implo-ring, and bea-ring.

Advent is the time for PREPA-RING. We tend to focus just on the external preparation for celebrating Christmas – making sure we’ve got the tinsel, the tree and the turkey - but what about the interior, spiritual preparation for the festivities? The best interior cleansing preparation for Christmas I know is to go to confession. It’s tempting to dismiss Confession, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as an uncomfortable and unnecessary Sacrament, probably because it is uncomfortable and easy to put off, because of so many “important” things to do. But we all have some interior road mending to do in the run up to Christmas, we all need to make that time to meet Christ in the sacrament of Confession, and receive forgiveness for the sins, even the little everyday sins of our lives. Parents particularly need to be encouraged to bring their children, once they are old enough, to receive the sacrament which is such a wonderful celebration of forgiveness, growth, and healing.

Advent is the time for CLEA-RING. It is the time for peace and reconciliation. There would never be a war in our world if somebody somewhere was prepared to say “Sorry, I’m wrong”. There may be somebody in your life to whom you owe those words. Personally I find it relatively easy to say “I did wrong”, because I then can go on to tell you who was responsible for making me do the wrong. (It is never me!). It requires greater honesty and maturity to be able to say “I was wrong”. Before all the excitement, which can be great at this time of year we need to stop and think about “What I need to change in my life?” There are many things that we need to straighten out, especially those hills of pride and resentment that block our view of Christ who is to come. Are there any behaviours that have become self-destructive which I can leave behind? What obstacle can I remove to prepare a way for the Lord?

Advent is the time for IMPLO-RING. For praying. If we have given up giving time each day to prayer – now is the time to begin again – it needn’t be a long time – a few minutes of stillness to turn to the Lord in prayer.

Finally, Advent is the time for BEA-RING. All personal preparing, clearing, and imploring will amount to nothing if they do not lead us to become better and more loving people. Our faith in God must bear fruit in concrete expressions of love, especially to the less fortunate among us. Christmas is not so much about feeling cozy and nice, or being on a spiritual high, as about becoming instruments of God’s concrete love wherever we are.

Lord, give us courage in our preparing, clearing, imploring, and bearing so that this Christmas you may not be hindered from coming into our hearts and lives to bring us the peace and joy for which we long so much. Amen.

With my prayers and best wishes, Yours devotedly,

Fr Alban OSB

PASTORAL LETTER

This weekend we have a Pastoral Letter from the Bishop which will be read at all Masses.

CHILDREN'S ADVENT CRAFT SESSION

This Sunday, **8th December**, after the 9:45am Mass at St Bernadette's Church, there will be a children's craft session and snacks. All youngsters are welcome to join in.

FLOWERS FOR CHRISTMAS

There will be a second collection this Sunday, **8th December**, as well as next Sunday for Christmas flowers at St Bernadette's.

FESTIVE CATCH-UP

Come along to St Bernadette's on Wednesday **11th December** from 10.30am to midday for a chat and cuppa with a festive theme. Everyone is very welcome.

12 GIFTS FOR CHRISTMAS

At this time of year, as well as providing essentials, our Foodbanks would like to provide some treats so that Christmas will be a little more special. Would you consider donating some of the 12 items below:

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| * Tub of Sweets | * Selection Box | * Yule Log/Christmas Cake |
| * Stuffing/Gravy | * Cranberry Sauce | * Christmas Pudding |
| * Savoury Biscuits | * Mince Pies | * Luxury Biscuits |
| * Pringles/Crisps | * Box of Crackers | * Christmas Surprise, you choose! |

CRIB SERVICE

Taking place on Saturday **21st December** at 12 noon at St Bernadette's Church: a short service with carols to prepare the crib. Children are welcome to come dressed as a nativity character of their choice. Followed by sandwiches, mince pies, mulled wine (for the adults!) afterwards.

BISHOP'S VISIT TO NEWBURY PASTORAL AREA

On 28th November Bishop Philip visited our pastoral area of Newbury and met with Fr Alban and other clergy of our pastoral area churches, along with the Evangelisation Strategy Team (EST), to discuss the diocesan ten-year mission strategy, *You Will be My Witnesses*, and its implementation.

Bishop Philip noted that this part of Berkshire is growing with many new developments; an area with great potential for the Church, for its growth, its life and mission. The EST has an ambitious set of plans for this and is making excellent progress. If you are interested in taking part, please contact the Parish Office.