



**PARISH NEWS FOR THE
CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, ANDOVER
NORTH WEST HAMPSHIRE PASTORAL AREA**

St John the Baptist, Andover and St John Fisher, Whitchurch

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Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday: 9.00am - 3.00pm. NB: CLOSED on Wed.

9th and 10th December - Second Sunday of Advent - Year B

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

“A straight path” is the image the Scriptures turn our gaze to on this second Sunday of Advent. We know that the goal - the destination - of our whole life on earth is Heaven. We know that we are to spend our life on this earth loving and serving God and neighbour, so that we will be ready for Heaven when God calls us.

But too often in life, we get obsessed with how fast we’re going. We get obsessed with moving for the sake of moving. Yet one of the lessons of Advent is that in our spiritual lives, the direction of our lives is far more important than the speed with which we’re moving. Many years ago, I attended a meeting of senior school parents and teachers. There’s only one thing was said that I remember! A father who had served as an Air Force pilot commented on how he thought senior school students made their lives more difficult than necessary because, as he put it, they were “all velocity and no vector”. Is that how we are in the spiritual life? If so, we’re heading for disaster.

Saint Thomas Aquinas said something similar: “If, then, you are looking for the way by which you should go, take Christ, because He Himself is the way . . . It is better to limp on the way than run off the way. For a man who limps on the way, even if he only makes slow progress, comes to the end of the way; but one who is off the way, the more quickly he runs, the further away is he from his goal.”

In our Old Testament reading we hear Isaiah prophesying 700 years before the birth of Jesus. He proclaims the same message as John the Baptist. The heart of their message is this: the most profound journey in life is a journey inward. As we travel by means of God’s grace a straight path into the human heart, we can expect to find there the very God who created that heart. But to find Him there, we must face two dilemmas of our own making.

Only within our hearts can we find God, and give ourselves to Him in that place of encounter. Yet when we quiet ourselves, and enter into our hearts, we first realize that our heart is given over to so many other things. The greatest struggle, the greatest battle in our spiritual life concerns not our neighbour, not our boss or co-workers, our teachers or classmates, not our spouse or our children or parents. The greatest struggle in our spiritual life arises from the fact that we have not given our own hearts completely to God.

Worse yet is that we’ve given our human hearts over not only to distractions, but to sin. If we spend these weeks of Advent moving outward in all directions, searching for the meaning of Christmas as we journey to the towns to shop, or to the next party to socialise, that road toward Christmas will wind and curve and bob, distracting and tiring us. During this season of Advent, we heed the call of Isaiah and John the Baptist by making straight a path into our hearts. That means clearing it of the debris of sin, looking seriously at ourselves and asking what changes we need to make to accept Christ the Lord as a newborn king: a king who wishes to die for us; so as to return our hearts to us, pure and focused on what is truly important in life.

From CDOW

'LET'S CELEBRATE' An evening of informal worship led by TROL. The Rhythm of Life' Band on **Thursday 14th December** in the Parish Hall. Open to everyone from all churches and none! Meet at 7.00pm on for tea, coffee, cake. Worship begins at 7.30pm with Bible readings, video clips, songs and a short talk, then a break for more tea, coffee, cake and then more worship of the same! All are Welcome!

TASTY CHORAL FAYRE AT CAROL CONCERT The annual Carol Concert by the Harmonium Singers at St Mary’s Church, Andover, has become a regular Christmas event in the town. This year’s event begins at **7.30pm on Saturday 16th December**. Tickets from The Lights, Newbury Building Society or choir members at £8.00. Alternatively you can buy a ticket at the door on the night for £10.00. Under-14s admitted free. *Proceeds this year go to Andover Crisis and Support Centre.*
See the choir’s website: www.harmoniumsingers.org.uk.

READINGS, REFLECTIONS AND CAROLS FOR CHRISTMAS on **Friday 22nd December** - the perfect way to start your Christmas weekend! Beginning at **6.30pm** in the Church, followed by refreshments in the Parish Hall.

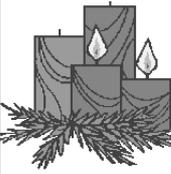
THANK YOU! Thank you to the wonderful team who worked so hard to organise and provide for the tea after the Healing Mass on Saturday. Following a beautiful Mass, about 80 people attended the tea and it was a great success!
Also, £130 was raised in donation for the SVP Baby Feeding Appeal. A lovely afternoon!

MASS TIMES AND INTENTIONS FROM 9TH DECEMBER - 22ND DECEMBER

Reconciliations each Saturday in Andover from 5.15pm - 5.45pm, and in Whitchurch before Sunday Mass.

Sat. 9th **Andover Mass 6.00pm** *Audrey Stephenson - Birthday Blessings.*

Sunday 10th December - Second Sunday in Advent (Year B)

 **Whitchurch Mass 9.00am** *Patrick Ryan RIP*

Farleigh School Mass 10.00am -

Andover Mass 10.30am *Audrey Francis - Birthday Blessings*

Andover Polish Mass 6.00pm - Confessions (Polish) from *4.00pm

Mon. 11th **Andover Mass 10.00am** *Audrey Francis - Birthday Blessings*

Tue. 12th **Andover Mass 10.00am** *Eucharist and Felicity Scicluna RIP - SAnniversary*

Andover Healing Prayers 7.00pm - 7.30pm

Wed. 13th **Andover SOW 10.00am** -

Thur. 14th **Whitchurch Mass 10.00am** *For the People of the Parish*

Fri. 15th **Andover Mass 10.00am** *John Woodward RIP - Anniversary*

Sat. 16th **Andover Mass 6.00pm** *Clifford Ramsubag RIP - Birthday Memoriam*

Sunday 17th December - Third Sunday in Advent (Year B)

 **Whitchurch Mass 9.00am** *John Neale RIP*

Farleigh School Mass 10.00am -

Andover Mass 10.30am *Josie Collopy RIP*

Advent Reconciliation Service at St Bede's. Basingstoke at 2.30pm

Mon. 18th **Andover Mass 10.00am** *The Toland Family*

Tue. 19th **Andover Mass 10.00am** *Michael and Margaret Cunningham RIP - Anniversary*

Andover Healing Prayers 7.00pm - 7.30pm

Wed. 20th **Andover SOW 10.00am** -

Thur. 21st **Whitchurch Mass 10.00am** *John Bagnell RIP*

Fri. 22nd **Andover Mass 10.00am** *Thomas Cullen RIP - Anniversary*

Please pray for Eva Boshier, Patrick Pacini, Daphne Channing, Audrey Stephenson, Jo Parker, Nan Mundy, Esmé Coveney, Maureen Bennett, Bill Hayes, Doreen Burke, Rita Lane, Valerie Muir, Kath Neuen, Mary and Alan Daws, Jess Dukes, Fr Gerry Mackrell SMM, Betty Twist, Mary and Albert Bullough, Cynthia Manning, Margaret Williams, Patrick Arnold, Patricia Hillier, Pat Moore, Ann Scicluna, Tom Wilkins, Diane Banks, Christopher Walter, Allan Wickens, Di Mussert, Lisa Ramage, Dick Germain, June Saunders and all those in need of our prayers.

FROM THE ANDOVER FOODBANK:

We would like to say a brief but HUGE 'thank you' to everyone who supported our '12 Days of Christmas' or who donated Christmas 'goodies' for our Christmas Food Boxes. Your support is, as ever, so very much appreciated.

PLANNING FOR CHRISTMAS . . . The weekend of Saturday 23rd and 24th Mass times will be 'as normal': i.e. Saturday evening on 23rd at 6.00pm and Sunday Morning on 24th at 9.00am in Whitchurch and 10.30am in Andover.

Although 24th is, obviously, Christmas Eve, attendance at the Sunday morning Masses does NOT fulfil your Obligations for Christmas!

Christmas Masses will be: Christmas Eve, Sunday 24th : Family Vigil Mass at 6.00pm and 'Midnight Mass' at 10.00pm preceded by Carols from 9.30pm.

Christmas Day, Monday 25th : Whitchurch Mass at 8.45am and Andover Mass at 10.30am.

DIOCESAN PRAYER INTENTIONS: 10TH DECEMBER - 16TH DECEMBER

These are arranged so that in the course of a year we pray for each parish of our Diocese and the Catholic organisations within it. **Sunday:** *Parish of the Immaculate Conception, Portswood; Parish of St Swithun Wells; Community of St Swithun Wells, Fair Oak . Monday:* *Community of the Immaculate Conception, Stubbington.*

Tuesday: *Parish of Our Lady Immaculate, Westbourne; Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese.*

Wednesday: *The Holy Father (ordained priest 13.12.1969) Thursday:* *Discalced Carmelites and the work of Boars Hill Retreat Centre. Friday:* *Association of Blind Catholics. Saturday:* "Life".