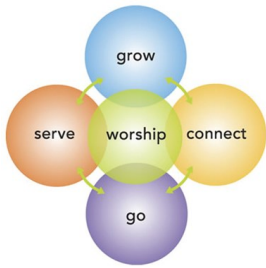


The Parish of
STONY STRATFORD
 with
CALVERTON



THE PARISH NEWSLETTER
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
SUNDAY 28th February AD 2016



Welcome to the Parish Church where, after the example of the early church, we celebrate the Eucharist: the "apostles teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42)

The Parable of the Vinedresser and the Fig Tree

Our Lord stresses that we need to produce plenty of fruit (cf. Luke 8:11-15) in keeping with the graces we have received (cf. Luke 12:48). But he also tells us that God waits patiently for this fruit to appear; he does not want the death of the sinner; he wants him to be converted and to live (Ezekiel 33:11) and, as St Peter teaches, he is "forebearing towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). But God's clemency should not lead us to neglect our duties and become lazy and comfort-seeking, living sterile lives. He is merciful, but he is also just and he will punish failure to respond to his grace.

There is one case that we should be especially sorry about — that of Christians who could do more and don't; Christians who could live all the consequences of their vocation as children of God, but refuse to do so through lack of generosity. We are partly to blame, for the grace of faith has not been given us to hide, but to share with others (cf. Matthew 5:15). We cannot forget that the happiness of these people, in this life and in the next, is at stake. The Christian life is a divine wonder with immediate promises of satisfaction and serenity — but on condition that we know how to recognize the gift of God (cf. John 4:10) and be generous, not counting the cost.



THIS WEEK IN OUR PARISH

- TODAY:**
 9:30am **PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles**
 6:00pm **FAMILY MASS at All Saints**
 Pray for: *Our Parish*
- Monday: Feria**
 9:30am 'Squeals on Wheels' in Parish Hall
 8:00pm Bell Ringing Practice
 Pray for: *The Sick, Housebound & Handicapped*
- Tuesday: St David, Bishop, Patron of Wales**
 10:30am **Mass at All Saints + 'Elevenes'**
 Pray for: *The Church in Wales*
- Wednesday: Feria**
 6:00pm Parish Office Open to arrange: Banns, Marriages & Baptisms
 6:15pm Handbell Ringing Practice at SMSG School
 7:30pm The Band - Practice at SMSG School
 7:00pm Stations of the Cross
 7:30pm **Mass at St Mary & St Giles**
 8:00pm 'A Faith for Sceptics' in the Parish Hall
 Pray for: *For all suffering addiction*
- Thursday: Feria**
 9:00am Mass for Y5 in St Mary & St Giles School
 10:30am **Mass at St Mary & St Giles**
 12:00noon Deanery Clergy Chapter
 Pray for: *For the Deanery Clergy*
- Friday: Feria**
 8:00am **Mass at St Mary & St Giles School**
 7:30pm Parish Singers Rehearsal
 Pray for: *For the terminally ill*
- Saturday: Feria**
 9:30am Posy Making in SMSG Church
 4:00pm Confessions in St Mary & St Giles
 4:30pm Evening Prayer in St Mary & St Giles
 Pray for: *For Visitors to our Parish Churches*
- Next Sunday: THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**
Laetare Sunday
 9:30am **PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles**
 11:00am **FAMILY MASS at All Saints**
 3:00pm 'Band' Concert in aid of Food Bank at SMSG
 Pray for: *Our Parish*
- READINGS NEXT SUNDAY 4th Sunday of Lent**
 1st Reading: Joshua 5:9a; 10-12
 Psalm: 34 (part)
 2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
 Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

- Sidesmen Team 4
 Altar Servers Team 1
 Offertory Parish Singers
 Cleaning Team 1
 Gardening Team 4

Worshipping Numbers last Sunday: 123

INFORMATION

The Order of Mass is on the laminated card. The references to the Scripture Readings, which may be either listened to or followed in the Bibles provided, along with the Psalm and the Prayer of the Faithful are also included in this Sheet. Hymns are unannounced but are indicated on the boards towards the front of the Nave.

AA Large Print Orders of Service are available at St Mary & St Giles. Please ask a Sidesman or Sideswoman for a copy.



A Loop System is in operation at St Mary & St Giles - please set hearing aids to the "T" position.



Access for the Disabled at St Mary & St Giles is via the path on the north side of the church. **At All Saints** it is via the South Porch.



Gluten-Free Hosts: if you are on a Gluten-Free diet and would like a Gluten-Free Host when you receive Holy Communion please mention this before Mass to one of the Sidesmen or women who will arrange this for you. Please make yourself known to the Parish Priest so that he is aware of your need.



Collections: for the continuing mission of Christ are taken while the altar and gifts of bread and wine are being prepared. If you are a visitor and a taxpayer and would like to make a donation please use the Gift Aid envelopes provided at the end of each row - please fill in your details. This enables us to reclaim, from the Inland Revenue, 25p for each £1 donated.



We observe a period of quiet prayer and reflection before the celebration of Mass, between the end of the Organ Voluntary and the Sacristy Bell being rung, in order that we may be better prepared to worship almighty God.



Please join us at the back of church for tea or coffee after Mass. A priest will be near the main door shortly after the end of Mass should you need to talk with one.

Please take this Service Sheet home with you and use as part of your devotions during the week.



The Real Easter Egg: if you would like to purchase Easter Eggs that tell the story of Holy Week and Easter, that are made with high quality, 'proper' chocolate, then please sign up on the freestanding notice board—in both our Parish Churches. There are three to choose from, all details on the board or see Lesley Salter. Orders by 28th February please!

Care for the Family is a Christian charity promoting and protecting all aspects family life. It is holding an evening for parents in Milton Keynes on Wednesday, 2nd March (see blue noticeboard and flyers). You would be sure to have an enlightening, inspirational and fun evening.

'A FAITH FOR SKEPTICS'

"People commonly assume that skepticism is the enemy of faith, and faith the cure for skepticism, that you cannot have one without losing the other. Like heat and cold, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil, they are thought to be contradictories.

But faith, if it is the right kind of faith, and skepticism, if it is skeptical about the right things, are not really contradictories. Like convex and concave, masculine and feminine, conversion and repentance, you cannot have one without the other."

John H Heidt

2nd March: 'Dangerous Dogmas'

16th March 'A Misplaced Skepticism'

This Course will surprise you. Each session will last no more than an hour and is designed to allow time for questions - of which I am sure there will be many!

Wednesday's at 8pm in the Parish Hall

FUTURE DIARY DATES

Thursday 3rd March
Milton Keynes Deanery
Clergy Chapter

Saturday 5th March
St Mary & St Giles Church will be closed whilst a DVD Recording is made of the Pipe Organ being played.

Sunday 6th March
The Rector, at the Invitation of the Bishop of Dorchester, will be participating in the Diocesan 'Shared Conversations' on Human Sexuality
Fr Joseph will celebrate both Masses today.

3:00pm 'Band' Concert in aid of Milton Keynes Foodbank
In St Mary & St Giles

Wednesday 9th March
Full Governors Meeting
at SMSG School

Saturday 12th March
10:00am 'Musical Bite' Coffee Morning at SMSG with John Neal on the Pipe Organ

Tuesday 15th March
7:30pm Parochial Church

Council in Parish Hall

Thursday 17th March
12:30pm Lunchtime Concert
at St Mary & St Giles Church

Diocesan 'Shared Conversations' on Human Sexuality

Saturday 19th March
10:00am Young Christians
Coffee Morning
2:00pm Duck Race
at the weir on the Millfield

Sunday 20th March
Passion (Palm) Sunday
9:30am Joint Parish Mass
6:00pm Evensong
& Benediction at All Saints

Monday in Holy Week
'Fig' Monday
9:30am 'Squeals on Wheels'
6:30pm Confessions
7:00pm Stations of the Cross
7:30pm Mass & Homily

Tuesday in Holy Week
9:30am Confessions in All Saints
10:30am Mass at All Saints
5:30pm SMSG Charity Meeting
6:30pm Confessions
7:00pm Stations of the Cross
7:30pm Mass & Homily

Stations of the Cross: Each Wednesday in Lent at 7:00pm - come and join this popular act of devotion as we seek to keep even closer to Jesus during Lent.

All Saints Church Singing Practice: Lesley Salter has very kindly offered to give us two singing lessons on Mondays February 29th and March 7th between 7-8pm in All Saints Church, to help boost our confidence and volume!

Women's World Day of Prayer: will be held this year in the Church Hall at St Mary Magdalene's Catholics Church beginning at 10:30am on Friday 4th March. All welcome.

Mothering Sunday Posies: I am delighted to be able to tell you that Messrs Willis are once more donating the daffodils for the posies. Sister Janet would welcome offers of help from those willing to make up the posies. This will take place at 9:30am on Saturday 5th March in St Mary & St Giles Church.

All Saints Scrubology Day: Thursday March 17th - please come along and help the merry band at All Saints give the church a spring-clean in preparation for Holy Week & Easter. *Thank you.*

Sainsbury's 'Active Kids' Vouchers: If you shop regularly at Sainsbury's then please do collect the 'Active Kids' vouchers and hand them to Kieran or Lesley Salter as they will help our Church School obtain sports equipment. If the person in front of you in the queue declines them...please don't be shy in speaking up and saying that

PARISH NEWS AND NOTICES



you know of a school that would appreciate them and asking if they mind letting you have them. *Thank you.*

Passenham Church Open Day: Our friends at St Guthlac's, Passenham are holding an Open Day on Easter Monday, 28th March, from 11:00 am until 4:00pm. On the 23rd and 24th April they are also holding a Flower Festival to mark Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday with the church opening on both days from 11:00 am until 4:00pm.

2015 Advent Appeal: The Trustees of SANDS have confirmed that a total of **£1041.29** was raised from our fund-raising. "Thank you from us all here at Sands for all your efforts; without people like you we would struggle to continue the important work we do. With very best wishes, SANDS Fundraising and Events Team."

Lent Appeal for the 'Barnabas Fund' It would really help the Treasurer if, before you return your box after Easter, any Gift Aid envelope could be enclosed within it with the necessary details filled in and a note upon it of the amount of monies contained in your box. Thank you.

NEXT SUNDAY - Laetare Sunday is the popular name for the 4th Sunday in Lent. Laetare means "Rejoice" in Latin, and the Introit (entrance antiphon) in both the Traditional Latin Mass and the current rites is Isaiah 66:10-11, which begins "Laetare, Jerusalem" ("Rejoice, O Jerusalem").

Because the midpoint of Lent is the Thursday of the third week of Lent, Laetare Sunday has traditionally been viewed as a day of celebration, on which the austerity of Lent is briefly lessened. The passage from Isaiah continues, "rejoice with joy, you that have been in sorrow," and on Laetare Sunday, the purple vestments and altar cloths of Lent are set aside, and rose ones are used instead. Flowers, which are normally forbidden during Lent, may be placed on the altar. By the way, did you know that, traditionally, the organ was never played during Lent, except on Laetare Sunday.

Laetare Sunday is also known as Refreshment Sunday, and it has a counterpart in Advent: Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, when purple vestments are exchanged for rose ones. The point of both days is to provide us encouragement as we progress toward the end of each respective penitential season.

*As part of this 'refreshment' there will be a **Concert** by our Church Band at 3:00pm in St Mary & St Giles Church in aid of the Milton Keynes Food Bank. All Welcome.*

Some latest news: as you may recall I reported recently on an upcoming meeting with the arboriculture office for MK Council regarding the Trees in the Churchyard at St Mary & St Giles. The meeting took place last Thursday. There were a number of factors that caused this meeting to be needed:

- The condition of the 6 Lime Trees and the concerns about their continuing effect on the Public Library and other properties.
- The damage being caused to the guttering, fascia's and roofs of Church Mews properties.
- The height of the redwood tree and the very large bow growing out of the side of the trunk
- The amount of pigeon droppings caused by trees overhanging the path from the Market Square gate, and the danger these droppings pose especially to the infirm.

The Council Officer's indications to us were that he would

be willing to recommend that:

- All the Yew Trees be reduced to below gutter height over a five year period by a measured amount each year (to do it in one go could lead to the trees dying) – including the yew over the path from the Market Square.
- The cypress (third tree in from the lychgate) – he would be happy to see removed
- The large branch emerging at a right-angle from north-side of the redwood can be removed and there can be some crown reduction
- The holly trees can be reduced in height in the same manner as the yews
- There are signs of decay in all 6 Lime Trees and he would be prepared to see these removed

These matters will be discussed at the March PCC Meeting, at which the PCC will need to agree:

- To engage an arboriculture consultant to draw up a Tree Management Plan in liaison with Mr Widd from MK Council
- Having received his/her report to submit that along with a 'Notice of Intent' to MK Council
- To apply for a Faculty once Local Authority Consent has been received.

All things considered this is very good news as it represents a major step forward in allowing us to make the churchyard far more manageable for our volunteers, solves the problems being caused to neighbouring properties, and will help to greatly reduce the amount of pigeon droppings that has been causing people to slip and slide.

Charities, charities, charities....The Rector of this parish, by virtue of his Office, is Trustee and/or Chairman of quite a number of local charitable Trusts. Some are incredibly small and others have considerable assets. For example one exists to 'provide bonnets for elderly ladies', and at the other end of the scale another manages a large farm and our Parish receives five-twelfths of the monies available for disbursement.

Of late two charities are managing significant projects - one of them is managing a portfolio of over £1m and looking at significant investment to provide income to enable its work to expand in the parish. Another, the Calverton Almshouses Charity is actively exploring the possibility of increasing its housing stock in the parish, working in partnership with others to obtain land and funding to start what would be a major boost to the social housing provision in our parish. Indeed, in just over a week's time an important meeting will take place between Fr Ross and two representatives of key land-holders - and your prayers would be very much appreciated.

With the cost of buying a house being what it is and private rental costs being so high there is a growing need to provide not simply what is referred to as 'affordable housing,' but good quality social housing. It is projects like these which, while small scale in comparison to the over all volume of housing being built, actually do help with community cohesion by enabling people to remain in the area they have lived in for much of their lives.

The work of all our local charities with students, the poor and in housing provision really do make a significant difference to peoples lives. Please for the work of local charities and for all Trustees and those they help.

MASS TEXTS PROPER TO TODAY'S OBSERVANCE

Reflection prior to Mass

The Lord's Supper (commonly called 'The Mass') is our most privileged meeting with Christ in word and sacrament. Today we reflect on the teaching of Jesus regarding repentance and God's continuing generosity. However, we should not presume upon this generosity as the parable of the Vinedresser and the Fig Tree illustrates.

The Collect

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD (SIT)

The First Reading

SMSG Reader: John Hickman
All Saints Reader: Sister Janet

Exodus 3:1-8a,13-15
Old Testament Page 41

The Responsorial Psalm

(from Psalm 103)

R/. The Lord is compassion and love.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord,
all my being, bless his holy name.
My soul give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings. ®

It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion. ®

The Lord does deeds of justice,
gives judgement for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses
and his deeds to Israel's sons. ®

The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
For as the heavens are high above the earth
so strong is his love for those who fear him. ®

Second Reading

Reader: Mary Saggars

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12
New Testament Page 143

Gospel Acclamation

(STAND)

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ.

Repent, says the Lord,
for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel

Luke 13:1-9
New Testament Pages 64

The Prayer of the Faithful

(Biddings: Dai Evans)

Priest: My brothers and sisters, we should pray at all times, but especially during this season of Lent: we should faithfully keep watch with Christ, so let us pray to our heavenly Father.

Intercessor: That Christians everywhere may be responsive to the word of God during this holy season....., let us pray to the Lord:

V/. Lord, hear us.

R/. Lord, graciously hear us.

That people everywhere may work for peace to make these days the acceptable time of God's help and salvation....., let us pray to the Lord:

That all who have sinned or grown lukewarm may turn to God again during this time of reconciliation....., let us pray to the Lord:

That we ourselves may learn to repent and turn from sin with all our hearts....., let us pray to the Lord:

That the sick and suffering may be given grace and strength, especially... Wendy, Fiddy Abraham, Anna Archer, Maggie Baker, Mary Barry, Henry Blake, Richard Coley, Richard D'Souza, Gill Edwards, Sue Gower, Russell Herbert, Paul, Rebecca, Magnus John, Ray Lewis, Kay Lucas, Isaac Lyon, Sue Maton, Cyril Millward, Capt John Richards CA, Shirley Scrutton, Alma Steinmetz, Fr Edmund, June Wilde, Janis Williams, Marian Wright...*for all those in hospital; those awaiting the results of medical tests; the housebound, those convalescent at home or in residential care; and all those in need...* let us pray to the Lord:

That the faithful departed, especially... Mick Lang, Violet Moulds, Norman Stokes, Sylvia Storer, Glyn Wyatt...and for those whose anniversaries of death occur during this week...**28th** Florence Hayle, Ann Gent; **1st** Fred Briggs, Russell Poppleton, Bertha Humphreys, Ernest Healey, Margaret Stirling; **2nd** Michael Whetstone; **3rd** Edward Eglesfield, Norman Gascoine, William Smith; **4th** Frederick Coats; Stella Willson, Cecil Powell; **5th** Mary Fitch... that they may enjoy the blessed vision of divine glory for ever, let us pray to the Lord:

✠ Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord.

And let light perpetual shine upon them.

Priest: Lord, may your people turn again to you and serve you with all their hearts. With confidence we have asked your help: may we now know your mercy and love in our lives. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Communion Reflection:

We were hungry, Lord, and you have given us to eat, thirsty and you have given us to drink. Lord we thank you for this food and drink that will not perish but will remain forever. Our hearts and souls long for you - like the deer that yearns for running streams, so our soul is yearning for you, O God. Let us never be satisfied with anything less than you. We will be tempted to satisfy our restless hearts in other ways. Help us to resist that temptation, Lord. Help us to realize that our hearts were made for you and that they will not rest until they rest in you. Sacred Heart of Jesus I place all my trust in you.