

The Parish of
STONY STRATFORD
 with
CALVERTON



THE PARISH NEWSLETTER
PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY
SUNDAY 20th March AD 2016

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on an ass's colt (Jn 12:13-15)!"

Today we commemorate Christ's entry into Jerusalem for the completion of the Paschal Mystery. In the old calendar before Vatican II, the Church celebrated Passion Sunday two Sundays before Easter, and then Palm Sunday was the beginning of Holy Week. The Church has combined the two to reinforce the solemnity of Holy Week.

The Palm Sunday procession is formed of Christians who, in the "fullness of faith," make their own the gesture of the Jews and endow it with its full significance. Following the Jews' example we proclaim Christ as a Victor... Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord. But by our faith we know, as they did not, all that His triumph stands for. He is the Messiah, the Son of David and the Son of God. He is the sign of contradiction, acclaimed by some and reviled by others. Sent into this world to wrest us from sin and the power of Satan, He underwent His Passion, the punishment for our sins, but issues forth triumphant from the tomb, the victor over death, making our peace with God and taking us with Him into the kingdom of His Father in heaven.



Please pray for the Sick: Wendy, Fiddy Abraham, Anna Archer, Maggie Baker, Mary Barry, Henry Blake, Peter Brazell, Richard Coley, Richard D'Souza, Gill Edwards, Sue Gower, Eileen Haseldine, Russell Herbert, Paul, Rebecca, Magnus John, Ray Lewis, Kay Lucas, Isaac Lyon, Sue Maton, Cyril Millward, Joyce Samuels, Shirley Scrutton, Alma Steinmetz, Fr Edmund, June Wilde, Janis Williams, Marian Wright

Please pray for the dead: Mick Lang, Violet Moulds, Capt John Richards CA, Norman Stokes, Sylvia Storer, Glyn Wyatt...and for those whose anniversaries of death occur during this week...**20th** Nan Bell; **21st** Alice Styles, Charles Sherwood, John Martinez, Charles Summers, Charles Hazelwood; **22nd** Fred Hearne, Susanna Poulter, Mary Read; **23rd** Minnie Roebuck, Elizabeth Read; **24th** Tina Brook; **25th** Hugh Rees, Mary Taylor; **26th** Mary Wallis, Malcolm Bodley

THIS WEEK IN OUR PARISH

- TODAY: 9:30am** **PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY**
Joint PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles
EVENSONG at All Saints Our Parish
6:00pm. Pray for:
- Monday: 9:30am** **Holy 'Fig' Monday**
 'Squeals on Wheels' in Parish Hall
6:30pm Confessions
7:00pm Stations of the Cross
7:30pm **Mass & Homily**
 Pray that: *We may bear true and lasting fruit*
- Tuesday: 10:30am** **Holy Tuesday**
Mass at All Saints + 'Elevenses'
6:30pm Confessions
7:00pm Stations of the Cross
7:30pm **Mass & Homily**
 Pray that: *we may remain faithful to Christ*
- Wednesday 11:30am** **Holy 'Spy' Wednesday**
 Chrism Mass at Lichfield Cathedral
2:00pm Fellowship: Devotional Service
6:00pm Rector in the Parish Office
6:30pm Confessions
7:00pm Stations of the Cross
7:30pm **Mass & Homily**
 Pray for: *For the Bishop & his Priests*
- Thursday: 9:30am** **Holy (Maundy) Thursday**
 School Mass at St Mary & St Giles
- 7:30pm** **THE TRIDUUM SACRUM**
THE MASS OF THE LAST SUPPER & The Watch (until Midnight)
 Pray that: *We may keep watch with Christ*
- Friday: 9:30am** **Good Friday**
CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION
 Confessions follow the Liturgy
2:00pm Devotional Hour at All Saints
 Pray that: *We may not flee*
- Saturday: 4:00pm** **Holy Saturday**
 Confessions in St Mary & St Giles
8:00pm **The Easter Vigil & First Mass of Easter**
 Pray for: *For Faith in times of darkness*
- Next Sunday: 9:30am** **EASTER DAY**
PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles
11:00Am **FAMILY MASS at All Saints**
 Pray for: *Our Parish*

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PARISH NEWS AND NOTICES

Student Cross: will as usual be staying overnight this evening in the Parish Hall. Nicola Crompton is kindly co-ordinating food for the participants and if any one could offer a desert for them she would be most grateful. She can be contacted on 07979 653515.

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.

Children's Activity Morning: We are offering a children's Activity Morning on Wednesday, 30th March from 9.30am - 1.30pm. This will be a fun time of learning, playing and eating together in the Parish Hall during the Easter holiday. Please see Jenny, Ray, Andrea or Richard as soon as possible to them know your children would like to come.

Very advanced notice! 60 seats for the pantomime Dick Whittington have been booked at Milton Keynes Theatre for Tuesday, 3rd January 2017 at 6pm. The tickets are still £18 (and free to accompanied children who are part of our congregations). Reservations can be made anytime - see Lesley Salter.

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 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.

(Reprinted from last week for those who were not at Mass):

For the avoidance of doubt: there are times when each of us can get hold of the wrong end of the stick. I am sure we can all think of examples where all manner of opinions are bandied about as if they were fact, while, of course, few, if any, bother to even ask what the truth might be. Sometimes we are even prone to acting on our opinions without even pausing to consider whether we might be making fools of ourselves. Such is the fallen human condition.

Then there are assumptions that are made about events that happen in the course of parish life. So, for example, a series of events is held and all of a sudden it is assumed, and others worry, that the priority of the parish has suddenly changed.

An example of this is the Rector's decision many year's ago to allow 'appropriate' concerts to be held in church. Does this detract from the Parish Churches primary purpose of the worship of Almighty God as some worry it might, and as some claim it does? Well, frankly, no it does not. In former times the nave was the local market place—it was the chancel and sanctuary that was preserved as the Holy Place, much as we do today.

Let's consider a few facts. Up until recently an average of between 20-30 concerts a year were held in St Mary & St Giles Church. Under the terms of the lottery grant for the Organ Refurbishment work there is an expectation that we would seek to aim for up to 50 per year. But given that there are periods of the year when concerts are concentrated, e.g. 'Stony Live Week' and the September 'Heritage' Weekend then we begin to see that this does not mean a concert every week. Some may counter that

this is still giving concerts greater priority than worship - to which I must respond in two ways:

a) the hours spent in worship each week in our parish, *Each week if you add up the total amount of time spent in public worship in an ordinary week it amounts to 9 hours. Of course, at many times of the year there are many additional services. A concert lasts around 2 hours at the most. Of course in Lent and Advent that amount of public worship increases, and let us remember that I have not included Marriages, Baptisms and Funerals all of which are public acts of worship. Then add to that the time that the clergy spend in church praying with people, hearing confessions and offering what the Book of Common Prayer calls 'Ghostly Counsel', plus the significant numbers of individuals who visit the parish church to pray and to light a candle, then surely we can begin to see where the Parish Church's priorities lie?*

and

b) where are the people when it comes to Sunday worship each week let alone on weekdays?

Yes, I have to ask this question, because it can appear sometimes we forget that God is interested in lifetimes and not the fag end of our commitment. The generation that was brought up knowing that God was a priority on Sunday is sadly passing away without having passed on its love of God and the Mass. The Mass is the summit and source of the week - it is the Great Sacrament in which we are fed with the Body and Blood of the Lord; in which we are strengthened to serve him in the world. Without this grace we rely on our own abilities and understanding. The writer of proverbs exhorts us to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (3.5). Our late, former organist, Derek Savage, once remarked to me that "it was said that St Mary's Church in the London Road was more catholic than St Giles because it had incense."

However, he went on to say that "St Giles had the better tradition, as it had the Daily Mass, and that is the sign of a real Catholic Parish." So forgive me, but sometimes I feel like Delia Smith shouting:

"Where are you? Letsby Avenue!"

So, for the avoidance of doubt, let me state very clearly: the worship of Almighty God, the proclamation of the Gospel, the teaching of the Faith once delivered to the Saints and the conversion of souls is the priority of this parish. No concert ever takes, nor will take, priority over any act of worship.

However, the Lord needs willing souls to join him in the vineyard. What are our own priorities? Where does God figure among them? Does he get a look in? Will we honour our forebears in faith and take up the practice of the Faith they gave us an example of? Or will we hide behind the excuses of this being the 21st Century, that God will understand, "won't he?" which implies of course that the things of this world take greater precedence. The first Christians would be aghast that our generation could be so cavalier about our salvation.

St Augustine of Hippo wrote that "The Church is a tree with its roots in heaven." I was reminded of that phrase when I was told of something that the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, wrote. "The Christian Faith comes from nowhere in this world. Christians do not exist in this world, they exist in heaven, in Christ, and they are ambassadors here."

"The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. This is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."

Fr Brennan Manning