

The Parish of STONY STRATFORD with CALVERTON



THE PARISH NEWSLETTER THE 2nd SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS SUNDAY 3rd January AD 2016

On Wednesday of this week, Holy Church celebrates the Epiphany of the Lord. It is a feast redolent with much imagery and teaching on the nature and person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we neglect its observance at our spiritual peril.

"Thy conquests, O King of ages! begin with thine Epiphany. Thou callest, from the extreme parts of the unbelieving East, the first-fruits of that Gentile world, which hitherto had not been thy people, and which is now to form thine inheritance. Henceforth there is to be no distinction of Jew and Greek, of Barbarian and Scythian. Thou hast loved Man above Angel, for thou hast redeemed the one, whilst thou hast left the other in his fall. If thy predilection, for a long period of ages, was for the race of Abraham, henceforth thy preference is to be given to the Gentiles. Israel was but a single people; we are numerous as the sands of the sea, and the stars of the firmament. Israel was under the law of fear; thou hast reserved the law of love for us.

From this day of thy Manifestation, O divine King! begins thy separation from the Synagogue, which refuses thy love; and on this same Day, thou takest, in the person of the Magi, the Gentiles as thy Spouse. Thy union with her will soon be proclaimed from the Cross, when, turning thy face from the ungrateful Jerusalem, thou wilt stretch forth thy hands towards the nations of the Gentiles. O ineffable joy of thy Birth! but O still better joy of thine Epiphany, wherein we, the once disinherited, are permitted to approach to thee, offer thee our gifts, and see thee graciously accept them, O merciful Emmanuel!

Thanks be to thee, O Infant God! for that unspeakable gift of Faith, which, as thy Apostle teaches us, hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into thy kingdom, making us partakers of the lot of the Saints in Light. Give us grace to grow in the knowledge of this thy Gift, and to understand the importance of this great Day, whereon thou makest alliance with the whole human race, which thou wouldst afterwards make thy Bride by espousing her. Oh! the Mystery of this Marriage Feast, dear Jesus! A Marriage that was promised to the Patriarch Abraham, confirmed by oath to King David, accomplished in Mary when she became Mother, and consummated, confirmed, and declared on this day; consummated in the adoration of the Magi, confirmed in the Baptism in the Jordan, and declared in the miracle of the water changed into wine." *Abbot Gueranger O.S.B.*



THIS WEEK IN OUR PARISH

TODAY:

9:30am

11:00am.

6:00pm

Pray for:

Monday:

9:30am

8:00pm

Pray for:

Tuesday:

10:30am

Pray for:

Wednesday:

6:00pm

6:15pm

7:30pm

7:30pm

Pray for:

Thursday:

10:30am

Pray for:

Friday:

8:00am

7:30pm

Pray for:

Saturday:

3-6pm

4:00pm

4:30pm

Pray for:

Next Sunday: THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

9:30am

11:00am.

Pray for:

THE 2nd SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles

Family Mass at All Saints

Service of Nine Lessons & Carols

at St Mary & St Giles

Our Parish

Feria

'Squeals on Wheels' in Parish Hall

Bell Ringing Practice

The Sick, Housebound & Handicapped

Feria

Mass at ALL Saints + 'Elevenes' +

Those affected by recent flooding

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Parish Office Open to arrange:

Banns, Marriages & Baptisms

Handbell Ringing Practice at SMSG School

The Band - Practice at SMSG School

PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles

That Christ may be proclaimed

as Saviour and Lord by us all

Feria

Mass at St Mary & St Giles

For all schoolchildren & their teachers

Feria

Mass at St Mary & St Giles School

Parish Singers Rehearsal

The Sick and those who mourn

Feria

Beetle Drive and Shared Tea

in SMSG School

Confessions in St Mary & St Giles

Evening Prayer in St Mary & St Giles

All Visitors to our Parish Churches

READINGS NEXT SUNDAY

The Baptism of the Lord

1st Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalm: 29 (part)

2nd Reading: Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38

Gospel: Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22

Sidesmen

Team 1

Altar Servers

Team 3

Offertory

Gardening Teams

Cleaning

Team 1

Gardening

Team 2

Worshipping Numbers at late Advent/Christmas Services: 2752
(in 2014 the numbers totalled: 1852)

MASS TEXTS PROPER TO TODAY'S OBSERVANCE

Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Before Mass):

Almighty and eternal God, I am about to approach the sacrament of your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Sick, I draw near to the physician of life; unclean, to the fountain of mercy; blind, to the light of eternal brightness; poor and needy, to the Lord of heaven and earth. I ask you in the abundance of your goodness to heal my ills. Cleanse my sins, enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty, and clothe my nakedness. Make me ready to receive the Bread of angels with such reverence and humility, such sorrow and devotion, such purity and faith, such purpose and intention as shall best lead to my salvation. Dear God, grant that I may so receive the Body of your only-begotten Son, that I may be worthy to be incorporated into his Mystical Body and counted among his members. O most loving Father, let me see your beloved Son, whom I now intend to receive, veiled indeed in this life, revealed throughout eternity face to face. He reigns and lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

The Collect

Almighty God, in the birth of your Son you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word, and shown us the fullness of your love: help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love that we may know the fullness of his joy; 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: Lesley Salter
All Saints Reader: Diane West

Sirach 24:1-2, 8-12
Old Testament Page 556

The Responsorial Psalm

(from Psalm 128)

R/. They are happy who dwell in your house, O Lord.

How lovely is your dwelling place,
Lord, God of hosts.
My soul is longing and yearning,
is yearning for the courts of the Lord.
My heart and my soul ring out their joy
to God, the living God. ®

They are happy, who dwell in your house,
for ever singing your praise.
They are happy, whose strength is in you;
they walk with ever growing strength. ®

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer,
give ear, O God of Jacob.
Turn your eyes, O God, our shield,
look on the face of your anointed. ®

Second Reading

Reader: Dai Evans

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18
New Testament Page 161

Gospel Acclamation

(STAND)

Alleluia, alleluia!

Glory to you, O Christ, preached among the nations;
glory to you, O Christ, believed on in the world.

Alleluia!

The Gospel

John 1: 1-18
New Testament Page 78

The Prayer of the Faithful

(Biddings: Fr Benjamin)

Priest: My brothers and sisters, at this season, the kindness

and love of God our Saviour has appeared among us. Let us offer our prayers to God, not trusting in our own good deeds, but in his love for all mankind.

Intercessor: For the Church of God..... that we will joyfully proclaim and live our faith in Christ the Word who was born for us of the sinless Virgin Mary, let us pray to the Lord:

V/. Lord, hear us.

R/. Lord, graciously hear us.

For the peace and well-being of the whole world..... that God's gifts to us in this life will lead us to salvation in the world to come, let us pray to the Lord:

For our community and our families, who welcome Christ into their lives..... that they learn to receive him in the poor and suffering people of this world, let us pray to the Lord:

For those who suffer from hunger, sickness or loneliness... Wendy, Fiddy Abraham, Anna Archer, Maggie Baker, Mary Barry, Henry Blake, Richard Coley, Gill Edwards, Sue Gower, Russell Herbert, Paul, Margaret Hooton, Rebecca, Magnus John, Isaac Lyon, Sue Maton, Susan De Mont, Cyril Millward, Capt John Richards CA, Jenny Smallbones, Alma Steinmetz, Fr Edmund, June Wilde, Janis Williams, Jeff Wright, Marian Wright... that the mystery of Christ's birth will bring them health and peace, let us pray to the Lord:

For those who have died recently... Caroline Adebiyi, Brian Barnes, Lyn Butterworth, Gloria Dixey, Martha John, Gay Millward, Joan Orchard, Francis Pitfield, Jack Smith... and for those whose anniversaries of death occur at this time...^{3rd} Mary Battams; ^{4th} Hilda Stock, Leonard Savage, Fanny Wace, Rose Barnes; ^{5th} Katherine Payne, Michael Hawkins; ^{6th} William Larman; ^{7th} Bill Bainbridge, Harold Emms, Margaret Barker; ^{8th} Bertie Stock, George Card; ^{9th} John Grimsley... let us pray to the Lord:

✕ Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord.

And let light perpetual shine upon them.

Priest: Lord God, Mary gave birth to your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, in purity and love. May she bring our prayers before you, for we make them in the name of Jesus the Lord. **Amen.**

Communion Reflection:

How great is your goodness, Lord, who does not shrink from letting your servant place you upon his heart! How great my own worth, since you have chosen me to have part in yours, to have you abiding in me, to love you as you deserve, above, myself.

Lord, take from me this hard heart, and give me a new, clean heart of flesh and blood. You who make my heart pure, take possession of mine and make it your home. Hold it and fill it, you who are higher than my topmost height, more inward than my inward being. You, the seal of holiness, beauty of all beauties, engrave on my heart your image and the imprint of your mercy. Be, O God, my eternal love and my inheritance. Amen.

Thanksgiving of Baldwin of Canterbury (After Mass)

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.

PARISH NEWS AND NOTICES

VERY IMPORTANT - Sound System: It is really important that the sound system at St Mary & St Giles is operated each week, but for this to happen we need volunteers to be trained in its use. Please have a word with the Rector or Churchwardens if you would be willing to be part of a rota of volunteers who manage this during the Parish Mass on Sundays and Feast Days. Thank you.

Rector's email address: Please note that the email address for the Rector has changed - see back of the Newsletter.

Aladdin Pantomime at Milton Keyes Theatre on Tuesday, 5th January at 7pm: Those who have booked seats please meet Lesley Salter in the Theatre foyer from 6.30pm to receive your tickets. Anyone who needs transport please let Lesley know. There are still a few tickets available, so it's not too late to book - let me know today! Any questions text 07789 898847.

Saturday, 9th January Beetle Drive and shared tea in SMSG School Hall 3-6pm: Come and play Beetle - all ages welcome - bring a little food to share at tea time. Tea, coffee and juice will be provided. Please let Lesley Salter know if you need transport 01908 567404. A fun afternoon for everyone and time for a chat and sharing a meal together. A rough idea of numbers would be helpful for planning, so please let Lesley Salter know if you are thinking of coming.

Saturday, 16th January 10am - 12 noon Musical Bite Coffee Morning in the Parish Hall: Enjoy tea, coffee and cakes in the cosy Parish Hall and have the added pleasure of hearing the piano, played by Dave King.

Thursday, 21st January TT@TT: SMSG Band will be giving a lunchtime Concert at 12.30pm. 45 minutes of fun music, with hot drinks on tap - you bring your sandwiches - we provide the rest! A warm welcome awaits to this free concert. Why not bring a friend or work colleague along?

Urgent Request: Do you know of any organists or pianists who would be willing to play at the 11:00am Family Mass at All Saints to cover two Sunday's per month. Please let Fr Ross know if you do, or indeed if you are hiding your light under a bushel and might be willing to have a go.

Readers at All Saints: If any one would like to be added to the list of Scripture readers at the Family Mass would they please have a word with Jane Hardy. Thank you.

Seating at St Mary & St Giles: the overwhelming choice over whether to have a cushioned seat pad or a sea-grass seat, following the great 'Sit down and Try Out' last Sunday is that we should have them with cushioned seat pads.

As previously reported the PCC is committed to seeing the disabled access project completed first. One or two people have asked whether we could decorate the church before doing anything else. While that is understandable, it should be borne in mind that it makes sense to do all the structural work first, otherwise it means decorating twice (and the cost of decorating the church is very, very expensive).

Similarly, there are two very good reasons for replacing the seating before decorating and they are: a) because it is important that you are able to sit in comfort; and more importantly b) because all the present seating is infected with woodworm and we need to replace it as soon as is possible otherwise we run the risk of woodworm infecting the structural woodwork in the building. The cost of such an infestation would be ruinous.

Once the faculty is granted for the current works, we shall

be launching a grant seeking and fundraising effort. A number of people have asked if they can donate chairs in memory of loved ones to which the answer is, "Yes, and that is very generous of you."

The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches has visited St Mary & St Giles and considered our proposals. At its subsequent meeting it recommended approval. We now await the receipt of the faculty, although there will be a slight delay due to the disabled access part of the proposals requiring a modest repositioning of two ledgers in the floor of the tower area. The Chancellor has asked for a little more information, but as these are not being removed, but kept adjacent to their present position, this is a minor part of the faculty application. By repositioning them they will still be visible rather than the new interior doors obscuring part of them.

A Personal Message: Dear All, Many thanks for your thoughts and prayers - they are much appreciated. Because of my Multiple Sclerosis I have had to give up driving so now attend a church local to where I live in Brackley. Since I started working in Stony in 1998 SMSG has had a special place in my affections and continues to do so. I hope to visit SMSG on occasions when I can get a lift. With best wishes - Michael Doolan.

N.B. from the Rector: Michael has asked that his name be removed from our prayer list, but I am sure that we would all want to keep him in our own private intentions and prayers especially when we are at the altar.

FUTURE DIARY DATES

Wednesday 6th January 2016

The Epiphany of the Lord

7:30pm Sung Mass at SMSG

Saturday 9th January

3-6pm Beetle Drive and Shared Tea in SMSG School

Saturday 16th January

10:00am 'Musical Bite' Coffee Morning at SMSG

Thursday 21st January

4:00pm Governor Training at SMSG School
7:30pm Parochial Church Council in Parish Hall

Wednesday 27th January

Almshouses Charity Meeting

Monday 1st February

Rector at 'Shared Conversations'

**Tuesday 2nd February
CANDLEMASS**

10:30am Mass & 'Elevenses' at All Saints

7:30pm Parish Mass at SMSG

Tuesday 9th February

Shrove Tuesday
5:30pm Confessions

Wednesday 10th February

ASH WEDNESDAY

7:30pm Parish Mass with Imposition of Ashes

Saturday 13th February

10:00am 'Musical Bite' Coffee Morning at SMSG

Wednesday 17th February

7:00pm the 1st of this Lent's weekly celebrations of the Stations of the Cross at SMSG
7:30pm Mass at SMSG
8:00pm the start of the Course 'A Faith for Skeptics' in the Parish Hall

Sunday 5th March

The Rector, at the Invitation of the Bishop of Dorchester, will be participating in the Diocesan 'Shared Conversations' on Human Sexuality
Fr Joseph has kindly agreed to celebrate both Masses today.

Saturday 12th March

10:00am 'Musical Bite' Coffee Morning at SMSG

Tuesday 15th March

7:30pm Parochial Church Council in Parish Hall

Thursday 17th March

Diocesan 'Shared Conversations' on Human Sexuality

Sunday 20th March

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



THE QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



Dr John Inge, Bishop of Worcester writes, 'Churches up and down the land will be organising myriad events in thanksgiving for the wonderful Christian service that the Queen has given, celebrating her commitment to God and the common good over ninety years'.

Official celebrations will take place in London between the 10th and 12th June including a thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral, a Birthday Parade on Horse Guards Parade and a street party in The Mall. It is envisaged that church events will be integrated into local community celebrations that take place that weekend.

The birthday celebration weekend offers churches the opportunity to share local stories from the last 90 years through exhibitions and oral histories, securing these memories for future generations.

Over the next month or so the Rector, Churchwardens and PCC will be organising our own celebrations to mark this event and hope to play a leading role in the Parish's observance of it.

A REMINDER

Why does Fr Ross often maintain a silence after the Great Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer?

The reason is two-fold:

- The Lord is now present on the altar in Sacramental Form and silent adoration is surely our best response.
- This is also the moment that Fr Ross brings before the Lord those specific intentions that people have asked him to pray about.

So, if you have asked Fr Ross to pray about someone, some matter, or for yourself, then this is when those intentions are being offered before the Lord as he is present with us.

Of course, if there is anything you would like him to pray about at this time you only have to ask

Hora Missae (The Hour of the Mass)

*Not very far away,
Not far from sorrow;
But that's of yesterday,
And of tomorrow.*

*Fear cannot press within
This circle small:
Nor things lost, nor to win:
The hour is all.*

*No grief herein can stay,
No fresh tears borrow:
There is no yesterday,
And no tomorrow.*

This poem was given to Fr Ross, on the occasion of his first Mass as a priest, by the preacher, Fr Sam Salter (onetime Chaplain of Cheltenham College) who had been given it at his own first Mass as a priest by a Sister of the Community of St Wilfrid in Brighton.

Lent, Holy Week & Easter 2016

"What already?"

Yes. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on 8th February and Easter is very early this year on March 27th.

In the light of this Fr Ross would appreciate it if Parish Groups and all those wishing to organise events for the next three months would liaise with him over the course of the next two weeks in order that he has everything in the Parish Diary. Once that exercise is complete he will finalise the Lent, Holy Week and Easter Programme of worship and events.

What can I do?

Begin to prepare to keep a good and Holy Lent. Think about what spiritual discipline you are going to take on rather than simply giving up veggie (in reality that is what much Milk Chocolate is as the cocoa solids are so often substituted with vegetable fats). There is nothing wrong with making sacrifices...indeed it is commendable ...providing one doesn't binge once Easter Day arrives!

However, the taking up either the:

Corporal Works of Mercy

- To feed the hungry;
- To give drink to the thirsty;
- To clothe the naked;
- To harbour the harbourless;
- To visit the sick;
- To ransom the captive;
- To bury the dead.

or, the Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- To instruct the ignorant;
- To counsel the doubtful;
- To admonish sinners;
- To bear wrongs patiently;
- To forgive offences willingly;
- To comfort the afflicted;
- To pray for the living and the dead.

are an ancient and proven Lenten discipline to aid progress in the spiritual life and draw us closer to Christ.

In the meantime, there are just over four weeks left to return your Palm Crosses from last Palm Sunday in order that they can be burnt to make ashes for use on Ash Wednesday.

If you wish some guidance in preparing for Lent, please ask Fr Ross to arrange to see you.

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