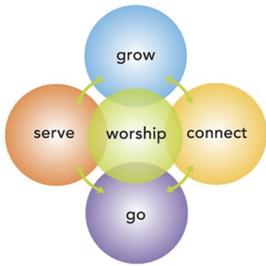


The Parish of  
**STONY STRATFORD**  
 with  
**CALVERTON**



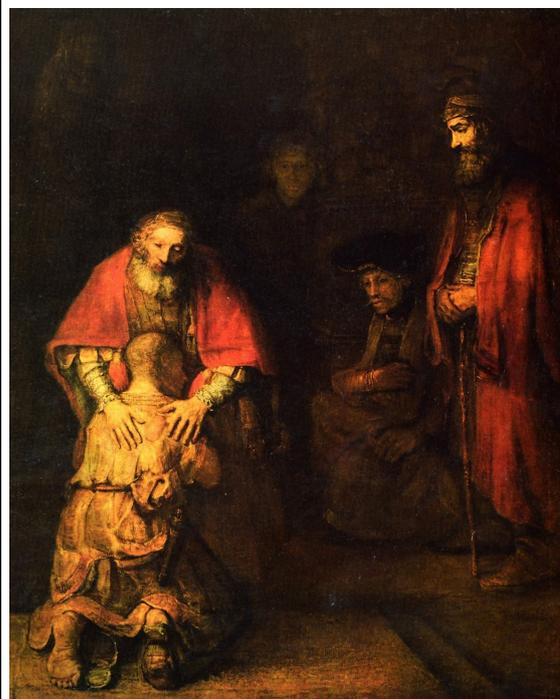
**THE PARISH NEWSLETTER**  
**THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**SUNDAY 6th March AD 2016**



*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)*

As some of us will recall in my first year in the Parish our Lent Course was on the theme of today's Gospel - The Prodigal Son. As part of that course we had a series of themed homilies and had a detail of Rembrandt's famous painting to aid our reflections. The detail was a closer look at the tender scene between the father and his prodigal son; and in this Year of Mercy we are reminded once more of just how merciful our heavenly Father is, if we but turn to him as does the prodigal son in the parable.

However, I wonder if you can just pick out in the complete image of the painting below, the shadowy figure of the elder son. In some ways he comes in for a rough ride in the way he has been portrayed in countless homilies over the centuries. He has been depicted as priggish, unforgiving, proud and overbearing. Yet, I wonder if we are missing something. He has witnessed his younger brother effectively wishing his father dead, but asking for half of the estate that would not ordinarily come to him until his father had died. We can see that despite his protestations he loves his father deeply and has the utmost loyalty to him in keeping with the Commandments. He has a sense of what is just, but there is something more and we see that in his father's words to him: "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." These are incredibly tender words from



a father who loves his son deeply and is not unaware of his loyalty and devotion.

We should always remember that the Father in this parable is our Heavenly Father. At times we may not understand why he acts in the way he does, but we can be sure that whenever he acts, he does so out of a deep love and concern for us his children. - all of us! He makes no distinction, he welcomes us all, and his love heals all our wounds - if we will but let him.

**THIS WEEK IN OUR PARISH**

- TODAY: THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**Laetare Sunday**  
**PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles**  
**FAMILY MASS at All Saints**  
 9:30am  
 6:00pm  
 3:00pm  
 Pray for: 'Band' Concert in aid of Food Bank at SMSG Our Parish
- Monday: FERIA**  
 9:30am  
 8:00pm  
 Pray for: 'Squeals on Wheels' in Parish Hall Bell Ringing Practice The Sick, Housebound & Handicapped
- Tuesday: FERIA**  
**10:30am Mass at All Saints + 'Elevenses'**  
 Pray for: The child victims of terrorism
- Wednesday: FERIA**  
 6:00pm  
 Parish Office Open to arrange: Banns, Marriages & Baptisms  
 6:30pm Handbell Ringing Practice at SMSG School  
 7:15pm The Band - Practice at SMSG School  
 7:00pm Stations of the Cross  
**7:30pm Mass at St Mary & St Giles**  
 7:30pm Full Governors' Meeting at SMSG School  
 Pray for: For our Church School
- Thursday: FERIA**  
 9:00am  
**10:30am Mass at St Mary & St Giles**  
 Pray for: Mass for Y5 in St Mary & St Giles School For the safety of all travellers
- Friday: FERIA**  
**8:00am Mass at St Mary & St Giles School**  
 7:30pm  
 Pray for: Parish Singers Rehearsal For families under stress
- Saturday: FERIA**  
 10:00am  
 12:00noon  
 4:00pm  
 4:30pm  
 Pray for: Musical Bite Coffee Morning Lent Lunch at St Mary & St Giles Confessions in St Mary & St Giles Evening Prayer in St Mary & St Giles For Visitors to our Parish Churches
- Next Sunday: THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**9:30am PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles**  
**11:00am FAMILY MASS at All Saints**  
 Pray for: Our Parish
- READINGS NEXT SUNDAY 5th Sunday of Lent**  
 1st Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21  
 Psalm: 126 (part)  
 2nd Reading: Philippians 3:8-14  
 Gospel: John 8:1-11

- Sidesmen Team 1  
 Altar Servers Team 2  
 Offertory Older Young Christians  
 Cleaning Team 2  
 Gardening Team 4

Worshipping Numbers last Sunday: 135

# 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.

## FUTURE DIARY DATES

### 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



**TODAY - 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.

**Mothering Sunday Posies:** To enable Fr Joseph and John Neal to get to All Saints in time for the 11:00am Family Mass, Sister Janet and Louise Brown will distribute the posies after the Recessional Hymn at St Mary & St Giles, and then Fr Joseph will distribute them at All Saints before the Blessing.

With many thanks for Willis' for the generous donation of the daffodils.

## '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

16th March 'A Misplaced Skepticism'

To be continued after Easter

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

**Young Christians Coffee Morning:** on Saturday, 19th March, with a Stall and Line of Pennies from 10am - 12 noon. If you would like to donate cakes to eat with the coffee or other goods to be sold on the stall, we would be extremely grateful. Please come along to the coffee morning and bring any spare coppers and add to the line of pennies. All money raised will be given to our Lenten Charity, the Barnabas Fund. Why not stay for a Lent

# PARISH NEWS AND NOTICES



Lunch and then take a walk to the river near the weir for the **Duck Race** at 2.30pm. 'Ducks' are on sale after Mass from Oliver and Rosie.

**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. The first last Monday went very well. There is a further opportunity on March 7th between 7-8pm in All Saints Church, to help boost our confidence and volume!

**Masses and Study Course last week:** Apologies to the disruption to Mass times and the Study Course last week. Unfortunately, Fr Ross has a bout of illness that has led to a number of things being cancelled or postponed. He hopes to be back on duty on Tuesday when all the usual pattern of worship and activities will resume. Thank you to Fr Joseph for covering this Sunday's Masses.

**Lent Lunches:** Saturday's in Lent at 12:00noon - in aid of our Lenten Appeal to assist persecuted Christians across the world.

**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.

**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 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.

**The Electoral Roll:** every year when we have to announce that it is time to add or remove names from the Electoral Roll it is almost guaranteed that someone will quite, understandably get confused with the Electoral Roll for Local and National Elections. Even I wish the CofE would adopt another name for the list of regular adult worshippers that it requires the Annual Parochial Meeting to adopt.

But for the avoidance of all doubt, yes each CofE parish has an electoral roll too. It records the names of all those over the age of sixteen who are regular Communicant Members of the CofE. Occasionally, someone asks to be included on the roll who is not a regular worshipper but this gives them no spiritual benefit whatsoever and certainly does not guarantee an entry in the Book of Life!

However, more seriously, it is important that all those who are eligible are included on the Electoral Roll

as it is such Rolls that enable the Diocese and the Church Commissioners to work out future clergy needs in areas, to apportion levels of Parish Share, and for use in statistics released to the media by the Archbishops' Council.

Each Parish has an Electoral Roll Officer and ours is Deb Kidd. Shortly forms for the inclusion of names not already included in our Electoral Roll will be available and dates will be announced as to when these must be handed in by for inclusion on this year's Electoral Roll. During the same period the names of any who have died, or who have moved away, in the past year are required to be removed from the Roll.

Every sixth year we are required to scrap the roll and start a new one from scratch. Mercifully, this year we are only required to have a revision.

Both Deb Kidd and Fr Ross can tell you if your name is already included in the Roll.

**Mixed Messages:** Surely all of us have been shocked and moved with compassion at the plight of so many young people within our own islands and throughout the world who have been targeted by some of the most predatory adults for their own depraved desires. Many of you will know that, during the last Parliament, I went to the House of Commons to raise with our MP my concern at the sexualisation of children in the media and the way in which some organisations that hold charitable status encourage under-age young people to experiment and lead "fulfilling sexual lives" - in reality this risks young people being prey to those who so wish to use and abuse them.

We live in a world where there are lands where young boys and girls are sexually abused by their families and other adults and it is defended as "their culture" - the knowledge of which is hidden even by those who in the west are pouring millions into 'safeguarding' measures in their own lands. Yet there are magazines, even in our own land, that are targeted at young teenagers and those approaching adolescence - the sexual content of which would appal most parents. It is a matter of huge regret that I cannot write "all parents."

The cases before the courts of late involving young people being trafficked around the country, having their innocence take from them by force; the stories of grooming by sports and media personalities; and of the authorities seemingly incapable of rescuing those at risk because of blind adherence to a false understanding of community cohesion, have been shocking.

But, of course, the most shocking of all is the sexual abuse of children by adults (clergy and laity) in the Church - and please do not assume that this is a problem for one particular denomination. All Christian Churches should be ashamed at what has occurred, and always seek to ensure that they safeguard all those in their care.

I also strongly believe that we should we encouraging parents to be more aware of the dangers of social media. Recent cases have shown that while such means of communication can be beneficial, they have a dark-side to them that leaves the vulnerable at risk of the predator.

Please pray for the protection of our children and young people from predatory adults, for parents that they may be vigilant and accept their responsibility for safeguarding their children rather than expecting others to do it; and for our Society, and especially those in authority, to take a serious look at what our young people are being exposed to in all forms of the media.

# MASS TEXTS PROPER TO TODAY'S OBSERVANCE

## Reflection prior to Mass

*Today's liturgy is a summons to examine the new horizon opened up for us by the grace of God. It is by God's amazing gift that we have been enlightened but at the same time we have been called to an awesome responsibility. 'Your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father'.*

## The Collect

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, 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

Joshua 5:9-12  
SMSG Reader: Matthew Lucas Old Testament Page 161  
All Saints Reader: Rita Oakley

### The Responsorial Psalm

(from Psalm 34)

#### **R/. Taste and see that the Lord is good.**

I will bless the Lord at all times,  
his praise always on my lips;  
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.  
The humble shall hear and be glad. ®

Glorify the Lord with me.  
Together let us praise his name.  
I sought the Lord and he answered me;  
from all my terrors he set me free. ®

Look towards him and be radiant;  
let your faces not be abashed.  
This poor man called; the Lord heard him  
and rescued him from all his distress. ®

### Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:17-21  
Reader: Lesley Salter New Testament Page 152

### Gospel Acclamation

(STAND)

#### **Glorify to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ.**

I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him:  
Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

#### **Glorify to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### The Gospel

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32  
New Testament Pages 66

### The Prayer of the Faithful

(Biddings: Sister Janet)

Priest: My brothers and sisters our faith is meant to bear fruit at every season of life. In faith let us ask God to help us fulfil our baptismal vocation.

Intercessor: When we overlook God's presence in creation, may the Spirit open our eyes to the ordinary spiritual wonders that surround us. We humbly ask:

V/. Lord, have mercy.

R/. **Gracious God, have mercy!**

When tragedies and natural disasters challenge our faith in God's providential care, may the Spirit of Jesus strengthen the weaknesses in our faith. We humbly ask:

When we feel trapped in unhealthy and oppressive situations, may our faith burst forth in confident appeals to God's liberating love. We humbly ask:

When we feel struck down by human weakness, social injustice, or personal sin, may our faith bring forth the fruit of personal conversion. We humbly ask:

When the cries of the poor and oppressed overwhelm us and challenge our carelessness, may our faith reveal itself in acts of justice for others. We humbly ask:

When the call to discipleship invites us to share in Christ's passion, may our baptismal faith uphold us in peace. Mindful of the sick we pray that their sufferings may be joined to Christ's for the salvation of the world... Wendy, Fiddy Abraham, Anna Archer, Maggie Baker, Mary Barry, Henry Blake, Peter Brazell, 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... We humbly ask:

When death takes from our midst those we love, especially... Mick Lang, Violet Moulds, Norman Stokes, Sylvia Storer, Glyn Wyatt...and for those whose anniversaries of death occur during this week...6<sup>th</sup> Frank Todd, Annie Martin, Wendy Trebble; 7<sup>th</sup> Vera Timmins, Edna Shillingford, Celia Meakins; 8<sup>th</sup> Rodger Webb; 9<sup>th</sup> Sarah Godfrey; 10<sup>th</sup> Sarah Bull; 11<sup>th</sup> Malcolm Swann, Audrey Bayard; 12<sup>th</sup> Sarah Henson, Roy Price, Nellie Tomkins, Joan Blow... may our faith in God's abounding compassion bring us consolation. We humbly ask:

✠ Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord.

**And let light perpetual shine upon them.**

Priest: Lord God of our ancestors, you have revealed your saving deeds to the children of Israel. Sustain us in mercy and increase our faith through Christ, our Redeemer. **Amen.**

### **Communion Reflection:**

*Lord, Father all-powerful and ever-living God, I thank You, for even though I am a sinner, Your unprofitable servant, not because of my worth but in the kindness of Your mercy, You have fed me with the Precious Body and Blood of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that this Holy Communion may not bring me condemnation and punishment but forgiveness and salvation. May it be a helmet of faith and a shield of good will. May it purify me from evil ways and put an end to my evil passions. May it bring me charity and patience, humility and obedience, and growth in the power to do good. May it be my strong defence against all my enemies, visible and invisible, and the perfect calming of all my evil impulses, bodily and spiritual. May it unite me more closely to You, the One true God, and lead me safely through death to everlasting happiness with You. And I pray that You will lead me, a sinner, to the banquet where You, with Your Son and Holy Spirit, are true and perfect light, total fulfilment, everlasting joy, gladness without end, and perfect happiness to Your saints. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen. (St Thomas Aquinas)*

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