

13 DECEMBER 2020

# Sunday Message

3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 3

**REJOICE –  
THE LORD IS  
NEAR!**

(JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28)



*Statue of St John the Baptist on the north side of Charles Bridge, one of the most famous tourist spots in Prague*

**John the Baptist is, in some ways, a transitional figure: he straddles what we usually call the Old and New Testaments, by which we mean the Jewish and Christian scriptures.**

He looks backward to the prophets of the Jewish tradition, especially to Elijah, the figure who represents the prophetic tradition. On the other hand, he looks forward to the coming of the Christ and functions as his herald, announcing the near arrival of the kingdom of God.

In today's Gospel episode, we hear how John was a puzzle to those who shared his Jewish faith: was he, in fact, the Messiah? There seem to have been more than a few people who thought that he might well be. The leaders of the people send representatives to ask John to clarify his position, and he states firmly that he is not the Christ, whose sandal-strap he is not worthy to undo.

The New Testament writers clearly had a difficulty with the figure of John the Baptist and his relationship to Jesus. John was obviously a significant person at the time and so has a place in the Gospel tradition. The reading from the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, the first paragraph of our extract today, presents him as being sent by God – as a witness. No matter how important John was in his own right, his place in the tradition is as a subordinate to Jesus, and once Jesus appears, John's role comes to an end. We might remember that the most important person in the Gospel tradition is Jesus: all other characters, no matter how significant, are always presented in relation to Jesus and never in isolation, separated from him. ■

## LEARN

In the Fourth Gospel, the term "the Jews" normally refers to the Jewish leaders who are hostile to Jesus.

In the Gospel according to John, "to believe" is to make a positive decision for Jesus and his teaching.

Priests and Levites are figures principally associated with the Temple in Jerusalem.

## REFLECT

Someone once remarked that there is no occurrence of the word "faith" in the Gospel according to John. This statement is, strictly speaking, true. The noun "faith" is not found, but the verb "to believe" occurs well over 100 times. Faith, in this sense, is not something that we possess but rather something we do. The Creed which we declare together at the Eucharist is a statement of doctrine, but faith is essentially a relationship with God. The evangelist John tells us throughout his Gospel version that to believe is to make a choice: it is not a matter of logic, but rather a personal decision to accept Jesus and his teaching.

As we approach the celebration of the birth of Christ, we might reflect on this aspect of our Christian life. Sometimes cradle Catholics say that they envy people who come to the faith later in life, because they have had to make a conscious, adult decision for themselves in a way that others, born into Catholic families and raised in a Christian environment, never had to. At Christmas, we celebrate the coming of the light into the world. It is our choice whether we live in the light or not. We might make this Christmas an opportunity to renew that resolution once more. ■

## SAY

**Rejoice in the Lord always!  
(Philippians 4:4)**

## DO

Look at the state of the roads around your town: how does their condition reflect your readiness to welcome Jesus at Christmas?



**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say,  
rejoice.  
Indeed, the Lord is near.

**COLLECT**

O God, who see how your people  
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,  
enable us we pray,  
to attain the joys of so great a salvation  
and to celebrate them always  
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING** Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.  
The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the  
poor,  
to bind up hearts that are broken;  
to proclaim liberty to captives,  
freedom to those in prison;  
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.  
"I exult for joy in the Lord,  
my soul rejoices in my God,  
for he has clothed me in garments of  
salvation,  
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,  
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,  
like a bride adorned in her jewels.  
For as the earth makes fresh things grow,  
as a garden makes seeds spring up,  
so will the Lord make both integrity and  
praise  
spring up in the sight of the nations."  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM** Luke 1

Response:  
My soul rejoices in my God.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her  
nothingness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.  
(R.)
2. The Almighty works marvels for me.  
Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him. (R.)
3. He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.  
He protects Israel, his servant,  
remembering his mercy. (R.)

**SECOND READING** 1 Thessalonians  
5:16-24

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the  
Thessalonians.  
Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for  
all things give thanks to God, because this is  
what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.  
Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the  
gift of prophecy with contempt; think before  
you do anything – hold on to what is good  
and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect  
and holy; and may you all be kept safe and  
blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the  
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has  
called you and he will not fail you.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
The spirit of the Lord has been given to me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the  
poor.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
John.

A man came, sent by God.  
His name was John.  
He came as a witness,  
as a witness to speak for the light,  
so that everyone might believe through him.  
He was not the light,  
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness.  
When the Jews sent priests and Levites  
from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"  
he not only declared, but he declared quite  
openly, "I am not the Christ." "Well then,"  
they asked "are you Elijah?" "I am not" he  
said. "Are you the Prophet?" He answered,  
"No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We  
must take back an answer to those who sent  
us. What have you to say about yourself?" So  
John said, "I am, as Isaiah prophesied:  
a voice that cries in the wilderness:  
Make a straight way for the Lord."

Now these men had been sent by the  
Pharisees, and they put this further question  
to him, "Why are you baptising if you are  
not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the  
prophet?" John replied, "I baptise with water;  
but there stands among you – unknown to  
you – the one who is coming after me; and  
I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap." This  
happened at Bethany, on the far side of the  
Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
(all bow during the next three lines)  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day

in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we  
pray,  
be offered to you unceasingly,  
to complete what has begun in sacred mystery  
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving  
work.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do  
not fear.  
Behold, our God will come, and he will save  
us.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

We implore your mercy, Lord,  
that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of  
our faults  
and prepare us for the coming feasts.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

The pilgrims continue to come. Only God  
knows what each one of us brings, and with  
what kind of heart. We come mystically to  
this cave. We know the mess we bring and  
the often distracted heart that brings it. But  
this is all we have – all we are. One stretches  
out his arms to receive.

Basil M Pennington OCSO

**Our Lady & St Edmund of Abingdon**  
**1 Radley Rd, Abingdon on Thames, Oxon, OX14 3PL**

We are a *LiveSimply* parish aiming to live Simply, Sustainably and in Solidarity with the Poor

Parish Priest:	Fr. Jamie McGrath	Tel: 01235 520375
Parish Secretary:	Lisa Paterson	Tel: 01235 520375
Office Hours:	10.30am-12.30pm Tuesday to Friday	
Office Email:	abingdon@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk	
<i>We live stream all services</i>		
Safeguarding Team:	Tel. 07572 935 230	
Visits at JR Hospital:	Priest/Chaplain 01865 221732	
Visits and Help:	Society of Vincent de Paul Group, contact via Parish Office	
Parish Website:	www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk	
Primary School:	St. Edmund's School, Radley Road, Abingdon, OX14 3PP Tel 521558	



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Reg. Charity No 246871

www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

**PARISH OFFICE OPENING HOURS:**

Please note that during this second period of lockdown, and until further notice, the Parish Office opening hours will be from **Tuesdays to Fridays from 10.30am to 12.30pm**. Outside of these times, Fr Jamie will respond to urgent phone messages as soon as he can.

**PRIVATE PRAYER**

We are blessed that the church can be open, but for **private prayer only**, on the following days and times:

- ✠ **Tuesdays: 12pm to 1pm**
- ✠ **Thursdays: 7.30am to 8.30am (during Advent)**
- ✠ **Fridays: 12pm to 1pm**

**MASS BOOKINGS:**

*On Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December you can book for Masses from Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> December.*

*Note that this includes the Christmas Masses, which will be as follows:*

- **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> December: 8pm**  
*(no Mass at 9.30am)*
- **Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December: 8.30am; 10.15am; 12pm**  
*(no Mass at 7pm)*

**PLEASE remember to give as many dates and times when you could attend – otherwise you may be disappointed.**

**Week 3 of Advent (Year B)**

**Attendance through booking system only, but also available on our live stream**

**Sunday 13 December**     **3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
10.15am     Mass     (Pauline & John Keller, RIP)  
6.30pm     Mass     (Eleanor Mary Wells, intentions)  
2.00pm     Polish Mass

**Monday 14 December**     **St John of the Cross**  
9am     Mass     (Christina Mary James, intentions)

**Tuesday 15 December**  
NO Mass     See: [www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/english-martyrs-vale-of-white-horse](http://www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/english-martyrs-vale-of-white-horse) for other masses

**Wednesday 16 December**  
7pm     Mass     (Deceased members of Hatton and Gibbons family, RIP)

**Thursday 17 December**  
9.30am     Mass     (Private intention)

**Friday 18 December**  
7pm     Mass     (Leonard & Anne Massarella, RIP)

**Saturday 19 December**  
12pm     Mass     (Deceased members of Delany & Dickinson family, RIP)

**CONFESSIONS**

By appointment only for now. Please contact the parish office to book an appointment.

**SPIRITUAL COMMUNION PRAYER:**

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot today receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there, and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

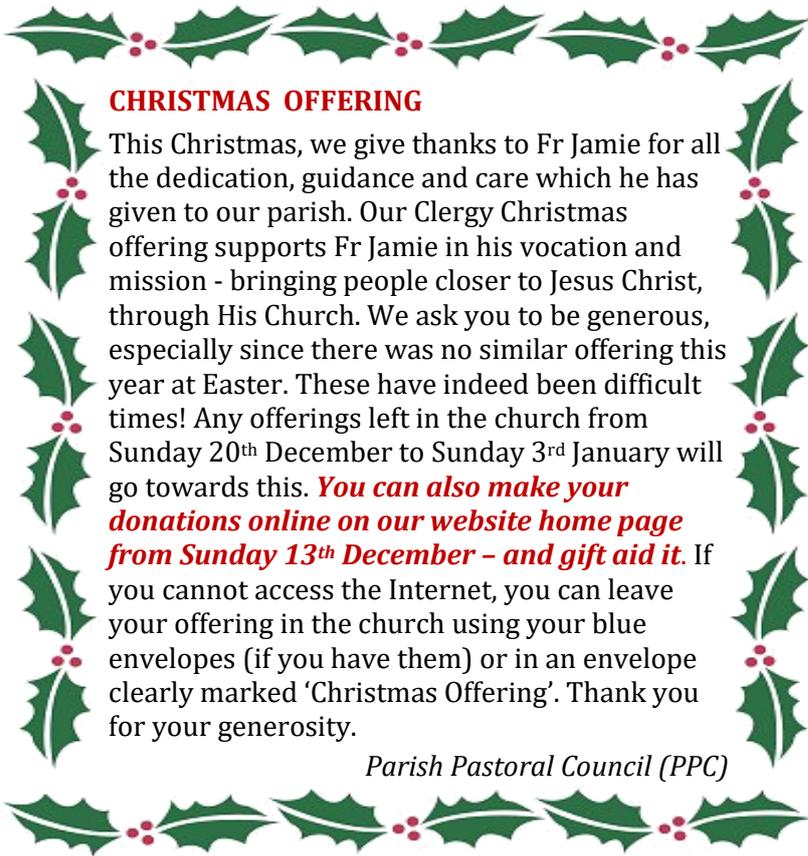
**HOW TO BOOK FOR MASS**

**No Internet Access?**

Phone **07395 946827** **EACH MONDAY** between 10am and 11am **ONLY** to book a place for the **FOLLOWING** week

**Have Internet Access?**

**DON'T** phone. Instead, email: [contact@ourladyandstedmund.org.uk](mailto:contact@ourladyandstedmund.org.uk) **EACH MONDAY**, to book a place for the **FOLLOWING** week



### CHRISTMAS OFFERING

This Christmas, we give thanks to Fr Jamie for all the dedication, guidance and care which he has given to our parish. Our Clergy Christmas offering supports Fr Jamie in his vocation and mission - bringing people closer to Jesus Christ, through His Church. We ask you to be generous, especially since there was no similar offering this year at Easter. These have indeed been difficult times! Any offerings left in the church from Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December to Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January will go towards this. **You can also make your donations online on our website home page from Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December – and gift aid it.** If you cannot access the Internet, you can leave your offering in the church using your blue envelopes (if you have them) or in an envelope clearly marked 'Christmas Offering'. Thank you for your generosity.

*Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)*

### ABINGDON FOOD BANK

**Still urgently needed are:**

- Tinned meat (ham, corned beef, meatballs, stew, curry)
- Tinned vegetables (carrots, potatoes) or Instant potatoes
- Tinned fish (tuna, salmon, mackerel, sardines, pilchards)
- Jam, marmalade and honey
- Tins or long life cartons of custard
- Small (500g) bags of sugar

The foodbank is located at Christ Church on Northcourt Road.

### NEWSLETTER ITEMS

Please note that the last date to get items in the newsletter for the Christmas and New Year period, will be **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December**. Thank you.



## Carol on Your Doorstep

Join in with your community to celebrate Christmas together by singing Silent Night from your own doorstep.

**8pm,  
Thursday  
17th  
December**

### SURVEY OF PEOPLE & PARISHIONERS

The Diocese want to understand better what you the people and parishioners of our Diocese think **and** what you consider is important as we journey **in** faith together. This will help us all to develop plans and priorities for the Diocese so that we can truly be faithful missionary people in a flourishing and vibrant Diocese that brings the joy and hope of the Gospel message to our communities and the wider world. The online questionnaire will run over Christmas and into the New Year and a link is available on the News page of our website. A paper version is also available for those unable to access the digital version: leave a message with name and address for Chris Smith the Diocesan Director of Communications on 02394 216496.



### ADVENT

We begin the third week of Advent (Gaudete) this Sunday.

**On our parish website, you can follow Advent reflections on the Advent calendar on our Home page and the videos on the Advent page of the What's On section. There are also activities for children in the Youth section.**

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Heavenly Father, sometimes it is difficult to live joyfully, especially in difficult or busy seasons. Please purify our hearts this week and remind us that You are in control. As we fix our eyes and hearts on You, fill our souls with renewed strength, courage, and hope. For the places in which we walk, the streets which we roam, and the paths that we cross - guide our feet. Take us to places where You would go and give us words that You would use, so that in this season of promise and preparation, we might point the way to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Amen.

# Joy

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