



## *Our Vision is a Person, Our Vision is Jesus Christ* 8th DECEMBER 2024: SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### WHERE IS GOD NOW?

*I'd like to share with you this week a short meditation of Erik Varden, Bishop of Trondheim in Norway, which inspired me in these first days of Advent.*

The word of God has been present in creation from the beginning. By God's word all things came into being. By God's word all things are sustained. In earlier times, this principle sounded somewhat abstract. You had to have something of a philosophical bent of mind to grasp what it stood for. We are better favoured. Divine providence and human ingenuity have given us a striking illustration. Think of a WiFi signal. For almost all of us, now, life seems unliveable without it.

What WiFi is to our gadgets, God's word is to the world as such. Should it cease, the world would collapse. In a way, then, God's word is almost banal. It surrounds us everywhere, even though we don't hear or see it any more than we see or hear a mobile network, be it 5G. We ought to think about this more. The fact that we exist is a constant gift from God. Even our breath becomes prayer if we are conscious of what it represents. 'Let Christ be the air you breathe!', said St Anthony. Yes!

The Word of God also resounds more particularly, though. Thus, "it came to John in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius, while Pilate was governor, etc." This list of dates and names, [that we can find in this Sunday's Gospel] can seem like dull pedantry – but no: these details bear a message. They tell us that God's action erupts in history measurably. God's word doesn't just surround us like a vague atmosphere. It speaks to us personally, expecting a response.

The call to John the Baptist was preceded by a long prophetic silence. People asked: Has God forgotten us? Why doesn't he speak? In our days, it is tempting to ask similarly. The life of the Church is marked by crises, compromised trust, broken promises. We live with great sadness and worry. We might wonder: What has happened to the promises that were in the air not so long ago, full of sweetness and strength? Where is God now?

It's a stupid question, of course. God is eternal, unchangeable. He is where he has always been: everywhere. The problem is not that he is far from us, but that we are far from him.

The message of John the Baptist points towards something that has already been given. To indicate the new that is to come, he has recourse to old words. 'Remember Isaiah!', he cries. 'The Lord asked us long ago to make what is crooked straight, to fill in valleys and level mountains. Have we done it?'

What about you and me? Do we prepare a way for the Lord in our lives, churches, and communities? Are our eyes fixed on him in expectant longing? Or do we really seek comfort and prosperity for ourselves. Meletios of Nikopolis, a bishop of our times, once wrote: 'The Church is not of man. The Church is of God. And whenever God is present, the human element ought to recede. When it doesn't, when instead it is validated, the Church does not do well. Anthropocentrism kills the Church and its life.'

As far as I can see, these are words we need to hear in our times, in our circumstances. Do we seek God? Do we surrender ourselves to him humbly and obey his commandments? Are we able and willing, as St Paul would have us be, to 'never stop improving [our] knowledge and deepening [our] perception of what is best', so as to be found blameless and pure on the day of Christ Jesus – not according to our will, but according to his?

*Fr Luca*

### GEM OF THE WEEK



This week's GEM is "A Life Worth Living", a CL Leaflet about Assisted Suicide - you can find this on our homepage. If anyone has suggestions for GEMs please contact [website.sswp@gmail.com](mailto:website.sswp@gmail.com)

For the next Newsletter, items should be received into the parish office by **10am on Wednesday 11th December 2024**, please email your messages/notices to: [office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

If you wish to make a donation to our parish please go to: <https://www.stswithunwellsparish.org.uk/financesdonations>

# LITURGICAL INDICATIONS



Sunday 8th December 2024: Year C - Year 1 - Psalter Week: 2

PSALM RESPONSE: WHAT GREAT DEEDS THE LORD WORKED FOR US! INDEED WE WERE GLAD.

1<sup>st</sup> reading Baruch 5:1-9 Psalm 126 (125) 2<sup>nd</sup> reading Philippians 1:3-6,8-11 Gospel Luke 3:1-6

Sunday 15th December 2024: Year C - Year 1 - Psalter Week: 3

PSALM RESPONSE: SHOUT ALOUD AND SING PRAISE, FOR GREAT IN YOUR MIDST IS THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.

1<sup>st</sup> reading Zephaniah 3:14-18a Psalm 129 2<sup>nd</sup> reading Philippians 4:4-7 Gospel Luke 3:10-18

## PARISH GROUPS



See our website for details of parish groups: CL, Fellowship, Stars of Abraham, Grail Seekers, Student Youth, Ark...

## MESSAGES



### Christmas Collection - Our Christmas

Collection celebrates and gives thanks to our parish priests and all the dedication, guidance and care they give across our parish. For your convenience there are several ways to make an offering:

- Loose cash or cheques in the collection basket on Christmas Day;
- Cheques made out to CDP St Swithun Wells with Christmas on the back;
- Bank transfer into the main parish account sort code 30-93-04; a/c 01786599 using the reference Christmas;
- Click on the green 'donate' button on the Homepage of our website and then click 'Clergy Christmas Collection 2024'. This will take you to a Give as You live page: <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/st-swithun-wells-catholic-parish-christmas-collection-2024>
- If you are a tax payer and wish to gift aid your offering you can use the yellow envelopes provided in the reception area of each church. Ensure all relevant information is included so we can reclaim the gift aid on your behalf. **Please write "Christmas Offering" on the envelope** - this can be placed in any collection between now and Christmas.

### Upcoming Second Collections

**Christmas Flowers** - If you would like to contribute towards the beautiful flowers & decorations that will be displayed in all of our churches there is a collection **this weekend (7th/8th Dec)**. Please **do not use** the yellow gift aid envelopes for this collection.

**Crib Offerings** - This year our Christmas Crib offerings will go to the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre (KHS). The key partner for the KHS in the Holy Land is the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and through the Patriarchate, they fund-raise to maintain schools, formation, charitable and social activities. Monies can also be sent directly to the Diocesan Finance Office marked 'Knights of the Holy Sepulchre'. Please **do not use** the yellow gift aid envelopes for this collection.

**Bishop Philip's Pastoral Letter** - Please read Bishop Philip's Pastoral Letter, "Hope", copies are inserted into this weekend's newsletter and are also available to pick up in all of our churches from this weekend.

**Upcoming Funerals** - The funeral for Fr Michael Cronin who died recently will take place in **St Vincent de Paul Church, Lordshill on Wed 11th December at 11am**. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Susan Santavito and for her family. Susan's Funeral Mass will

take place on **Thursday 19th December at 11am in Holy Cross**.

### Advent Penitential Services

These will be held across our parish, with the opportunity for individual confession:

**Thursday 12th December, 7.30pm** – OLQA

**Friday 20th December, 7.30pm** – St Andrew

**Saturday 21st December, 11am** – Holy Cross

*A number of priests will be available on each occasion.*

**OLQA Volunteers** - There will be a meeting for all the volunteers in Our Lady Queen of the Apostles and for those who want to join us to contribute to the life of the Catholic Church in Bishop's Waltham. We are gathering in the church hall on **Saturday 7th December at 4pm**.

**Annual Christmas Fayre at St Edward's after Mass on Saturday 7th & Sun 8th December**. Christmas related "goodies" will be on sale and a Christmas hamper will be raffled. Donations of cakes or Christmas gifts will be gratefully received. All proceeds will go to CAFOD's Advent Focus helping vulnerable people in Ukraine to survive the winter months.

### Christmas Flower Workshop at OLQA

For all novices who would like to create a simple arrangement for the Christmas table - no previous skills needed! The OLQA (Bishop's Waltham) Flower Ladies are holding a workshop in the church hall for up to 15 people on **Friday 13th December from 9.00 - 12.00, which will be followed by Mass, then a simple lunch**.

**Minimum donation to cover the morning: £10**

(all donations will go to Crisis At Christmas).

If you would like to join us for an enjoyable morning, please email - [paulinestmargaret@gmail.com](mailto:paulinestmargaret@gmail.com)

### Parish Christmas Party

**Sunday 15th December, 1pm-4pm at St Swithun Wells Primary School**

**Menu:** Main - Chicken with vegetables, a vegetarian option will be available and a Dessert.

Please bring your own drinks.

**Price £10 per person**, children 16 and under free. We have kept the ticket price the same as last year (£10), however if you are able to pay more, please do so. In Holy Cross & St Edward's you can pay by contactless if you would prefer.

**Tickets** - a limited number of tickets is available, the **deadline for purchasing tickets is Sunday 8th December**. **Admission by ticket only**

Christmas jumpers and fancy dress actively encouraged!

## MESSAGES CONTINUED

**OLQA Annual Carol Service - Sunday 15th December at 6pm followed by mulled wine and mince pies.** Any offer of mince pies and raffle gifts would be gratefully appreciated. All are welcome!

**CL Christmas Carols** - Our Christmas Carols will be back on **21st December 2024 at 2pm in Eastleigh (Swan Centre)**. For those who would like to help with the singing, there will be two rehearsals, on **10th and 17th December at 8pm in Holy Cross**.

**OLQA Christmas Clean - Saturday 21st December 10am to 12 noon**, refreshments provided. Plenty of jobs to do, time to chat over a cuppa and we make the church look beautiful for Christmas.

**Romsey United Reformed Church** have kindly invited us to join them in their Carols by Candlelight Service of readings and carols at **6.30pm on Saturday 21st December** in their church.

**Carol Service** - Faith, festivities, food and fun! Please join us for our Carol Service on **Sunday 22nd December 2024 at 3pm**, in **St Swithun Wells Church, Fair Oak**.

### **St Swithun Wells, Fair Oak - Fundraising for CAFOD**

This year, we have two initiatives:

Firstly, our Christmas Card Collection - last year we raised £300 for a Medical Outreach Team. This year we'd like to do it again!

Secondly, we have a hamper to raffle with Fair Trade goods. Tickets on sale after Mass at Fair Oak, the draw will be at our Carol Service on 22nd December.

*Thank you, Trisha Holmes*

**Two Saints & Poitiers** - Our annual collection of gifts for Two Saints & Poitiers will be taking place at **St Edward's next weekend (14th & 15th December)**. For Two Saints gifts of hats, gloves, scarves, socks and toiletries for both men and women; for Poitiers non perishable food e.g. cereals, pasta, tins also biscuits, sweets, chocolates, cakes and other Christmas goods would all be gratefully received. Please bring your gifts (UNWRAPPED!) in a "gift" type bag with a label attached naming the charity on Saturday evening/ Sunday morning. For more details contact Clare Lasker on 02380 252138.

**Parish Office** - will be closed on **Friday 13th December**, we apologise for any inconvenience caused.

**Date for your Diary! Seniors (over 60s) Afternoon Tea - Sunday 2nd February 2025.**

Details to follow.

**Solemnity of St Swithun Wells** - On **Tues 10th December** we celebrate the Solemnity of our Patron, St Swithun Wells. We will celebrate this during our Masses at St Andrew (10am) and St Edward (6pm), please try and attend and pray for our parish.

**St Joseph's Afternoon Club** - Due to an ongoing decline in attendance we have sadly made the decision to end the Afternoon Club. Many thanks to all those who have supported the club over the years.

### **Parish Pilgrimage (Fri 23rd - Mon 26th May 2025)**

The pilgrimage to Lisieux, France will be led by Fr Raffaele & Fr Mario. We will visit the place where St Therese lived and the surrounding area. See posters on church noticeboards; the itinerary, booking form and more information are on the parish website.

**Trip to Italy for young people (21st - 26th August 2025)** there will be a trip to Italy for young people aged 18 to 25. The reason for the trip is to attend the Rimini Meeting, a cultural event organised by the Catholic Movement of Communion and Liberation. It is a week of conferences, exhibitions, etc; on different topics. All run by volunteers. We will also be visiting different places and staying in Cesenatico. **The final cost will be £600** which includes: flight, hotel and minibus hire. **Meals are not included.**

I would ask you to **let me know by Sunday 12th January 2025** if you will be coming and to pay a **deposit of £300**, for further information please contact Fr Matteo: [mpagani@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:mpagani@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

## SCHOOL NOTICES

### **St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School**

**Nativity for the Parish - Friday 13th December at 10am** in our school hall. The parish is warmly invited to join us.

### **St George Catholic College**

**Give the Gift of a Picnic Bench This Christmas!**

This Christmas, please consider supporting Saint George Catholic College Governors by contributing towards the cost of a picnic bench, which students have identified as a need for the school. The bench costs £600 and will include a plaque recognising our parish's generosity. It's a meaningful way to give back during the season of giving. Every donation, no matter the amount, is welcome! If you'd like to contribute, please arrange payment via your bank to Account name: St George College – Governors A/C, Sort Code: 30-80-27, Account number: 23820860, Reference: Bench + your surname. Thank you.

### **At a Glance - List of Upcoming Parish Events**

**7th Dec:** OLQA Volunteers Meeting  
**7th & 8th Dec:** CAFOD Christmas Fayre at St Edward  
**12th Dec:** Penitential Service at OLQA  
**13th Dec:** Christmas Flowers Workshop at OLQA  
**15th Dec:** Parish Christmas Party  
**15th Dec:** OLQA Carol Service  
**20th Dec:** Penitential Service at St Andrew's  
**21st Dec:** Penitential Service at Holy Cross  
**21st Dec:** CL Christmas Carols  
**22nd Dec:** Carol Service at St Swithun Wells Church

### **CONFESSION (SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION)**

<b>Tuesday:</b>	9.30am-10.00am (before Mass)	St Andrew
<b>Tuesday:</b>	6.30pm-7.30pm (after Mass)	St Edward
<b>Saturday:</b>	10.00am-10.30am (after Mass)	Holy Cross
	5.30pm-6.00pm	OLQA
	5.30pm-6.00pm	St Joseph
<b>Sunday:</b>	8.30am-9.00am (before Mass)	St Edward
	8.30am-9.00am (before Mass)	St Andrew

## MASS TIMES FOR OUR CHURCH COMMUNITIES

DATE	TIME	CHURCH	MASS INTENTION
Saturday 7th Dec <i>Morning Mass: St Ambrose</i>	9.30am 5.00pm 6.00pm 6.00pm 6.30pm	Holy Cross St Swithun Wells OLQA St Joseph St Edward	Mr & Mrs Meech and Family (Wellbeing) Holy Souls in Purgatory RIP People of the Parish Sr Alice RIP Living & Deceased Members of the Lennon Family
Sunday 8th December  <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i>	8.30am 9.00am 9.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 5.30pm	Holy Cross St Edward St Andrew OLQA Holy Cross (also livestreamed) St Joseph Holy Cross	<i>Polska Msza Święta</i> Mrs Edward Christian FM Benito Ocaya RIP Holy Souls in Purgatory RIP Ellen Lane RIP FM Deceased Friends and Relatives of the Ceresa Family Marion Smith RIP
Monday 9th Dec <i>The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>	9.30am	Holy Cross	Sunny Thomas RIP; Baby Thomas RIP
Tuesday 10th Dec <i>St Swithun Wells</i>	10.00am 6.00pm	St Andrew St Edward	People of the Parish People of the Parish
Wed 11th Dec	9.30am 9.30am	Holy Cross St Edward	Gerard Carr RIP FM Alice-Marie Baird (70th Birthday)
Thursday 12th Dec	9.30am 12 Noon 6.00pm	Holy Cross OLQA St Joseph	Luis Castro RIP FM  Sr Norbert (Wellbeing)
Friday 13th Dec <i>St Lucy</i>	10.00am 10.00am 12 Noon	St Joseph St Edward OLQA	Sr Eileen (Wellbeing) George, Gertrude & Mary Lawton RIP Anniversary Holy Souls in Purgatory RIP
Saturday 14th Dec <i>Morning Mass: St John of the Cross</i>	9.30am 5.00pm 6.00pm 6.00pm 6.30pm	Holy Cross St Swithun Wells OLQA St Joseph St Edward	Ron Reynolds FM People of the Parish Cecilia Delmonte & Family (Special Intention) Bridie Firhurst & Family Robin Mooney (Wellbeing)
Sunday 15th December  <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>	8.30am 9.00am 9.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 5.30pm	Holy Cross St Edward St Andrew OLQA Holy Cross (also livestreamed) St Joseph Holy Cross	<i>Polska Msza Święta</i> Holy Souls in Purgatory RIP Daniel Smith RIP Anniversary Holy Souls in Purgatory RIP Margaret Gay Bradford-Mortimer RIP Sean Kelly RIP Anniversary Mr Pappachan RIP

### CLERGY & PARISH OFFICE

Fr Raffaele Cossa (Parish Priest)

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Fr Luca Speziale (Assistant Priest)

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Fr Mario Toma (Assistant Priest)

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Fr Matteo Pagani (Assistant Priest)

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**Parish Office**

Holy Cross Church, 53 Leigh Road, Eastleigh, SO50 9DF Tel: 02380 273882

Opening Times: Mon-Thurs 9.30am-5.30pm;  
Fri 9.30am-2.30pm (see newsletter for changes).

**Holy Cross Resource Centre & Finance Admin:** Fiona Mooney

Email: [accounts@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:accounts@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

**Parish Secretary:** Sarah Goodfellow

Email: [office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

**Website Contact:** [website.sswp@gmail.com](mailto:website.sswp@gmail.com)

**Safeguarding:** Please see Safeguarding posters in each of our churches for details of the Parish Safeguarding Reps. Diocesan Safeguarding: Ruth Attfield [rattfield@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:rattfield@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)