



PARISH NEWS FOR THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, ANDOVER

St John the Baptist, Andover and St John Fisher, Whitchurch

Office: Alexandra Rd, Andover, SP10 3AD Tel: 01264 352829

Father Austin email: agurr@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Office email: office@catholic-andover.org.uk

or stjtb@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk **Website:** www.catholic-andover.org.uk

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Jackie Kelly: safeguarding@catholic-andover.org.uk

Office Hours: Monday: 8.30am - 3.30pm; Tues. & Thurs.: 8.30am - 12 noon; Fri. 8.30am - 2.30pm.

NB: The Office is CLOSED on Wednesdays / Father Austin's Day off: Wednesday.

27th/28th April - 5th Sunday of Easter. 4th/5th May - 6th Sunday of Easter. 11th/12th May - 7th Sunday of Easter

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK - 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Today's first reading addresses us as children. We are given some advice . . . Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and in truth. *Translation: Actions speak louder than words.*

It's pretty easy to talk about doing the right thing, but acting on it can be a challenge. However, John goes on to share some tips to help us do this: 'Love one another' and 'Keep His commandments and do what pleases Him'

Sounds simple right? I can easily think of a couple of people who present huge challenges to me personally when I try to practice the "love one another" idea. No matter what I do, or how hard I pray for patience in dealing with them, things are difficult! However, I must persevere and love them.

So, here's my trick . . . I stop and think of how difficult I might be to deal with, and how it may be difficult to love *me* - and this can be painful! Usually I tend to spend more time thinking of the shortcomings of those I am trying to love than my own faults, but in doing this, perspective is gained.

Today's gospel is the story of the vine and the vine grower. "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit because without me you can do nothing"

The story starts with a description of our Father, the vine grower. The vine grower very carefully works in the vineyard caring for the individual branches daily. Those branches that are not bearing fruit are removed; the fruit bearing branches are pruned so as to produce more fruit. The vine grower wants nothing more than to have a fruitful crop, and spends great time and care in achieving that. He will do whatever is needed to that end.

The Father spends great time and care in watching over each of us. If we remain in Him and His words remain in us, we are told to ask for whatever is wanted and it will be done.

When I wrote this I was just back from a funeral service for a friend who was taken too soon - a young husband, father, son, brother and friend to so many. A sibling reflected on how for five days everybody prayed for healing, and it may seem that those prayers weren't answered. She went on to talk about the different outcomes that could have been. She shared that although it may seem that prayers weren't answered, actually they were - going to Heaven was better than some outcomes. In one of the most difficult times of her life, she encouraged others not to despair, that prayers are answered. For me, this was very powerful message from a suffering family. This was a true example of a family who has been 'pruned' by our Father.

During incredibly difficult times, fruit is born. The vine grower is caring for his crop.

A.M.

DIOCESAN PRAYER INTENTIONS: 28th April - 4th May

Sunday: Montfort Missionaries in the Diocese. **Monday:** St Joseph's, Ashurst.

Tuesday: : Bishop Philip's home Diocese of Shrewsbury. **Wednesday:** God's blessing on human work.

Thursday: Parish Disability Representatives. **Friday:** : Catholic Disability Care Services.

Saturday: Parish of English Martyrs, Reading.

The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated next Thursday and is a Holy Day of Obligation.

The next pre-Baptism evening course will be on **Tuesday 28th May 2024** from 7.00pm to approximately 9.00pm in the Parish Hall. Completion of the session is required before booking a baptism. To register for the course, please email / telephone the Parish Office. Both parents are requested to attend - but not children - and you must be registered with the Parish.

J S BACH'S ST JOHN PASSION sung (in English) by **ANDOVER CHORAL SOCIETY** at St Mary's Church Andover on **Saturday 4th May**

from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. *Andover Choral is accompanied by the brilliant Westminster Chamber Orchestra and professional soloists.* Tickets £15 available from: The Lights Box Office, Andover in person or by phone 01264 368366

or online at: ticketsource.co.uk/andover-choral-society

The Ticketsource box office on 0333 666 3366, or choir members.

(See Paula Degg at 6.00pm Saturday Mass or Mark J-F after 10.30am Sunday Mass on 21st and 28th April)

4th and 5th May - Sixth Sunday of Easter

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Today's readings include a dizzying celebration of Jesus and his love and friendship for us. The first line of the gospel is from Jesus: *'I love you'*. The final words tell us how to follow him: *'Love one another'*, something repeated in the epistle from 1 John. In just those two readings some form of the word 'love' is used 19 times. How can we go through life wondering if we are worthy of that?

John's Gospel, whose poetic and symbolic language can be sometimes challenging gives us a clear message: Jesus is our friend, and he loves us. Although we often make following Jesus more complicated, his words to us are simple. The opening sentence of the gospel says, "As the Father loves me, so I also love you."

It doesn't get any clearer. Jesus loves us. We don't have to be perfect, sinless or even devout. Jesus asks us, "remain in my love." It's an invitation to remain in the awareness that as we go through our daily lives, we are loved deeply by Jesus in everything we do. More than that, Jesus tells us "you are my friends."

Jesus, our redeemer, is not standing back observing us, but offering us a real relationship of love and friendship. We want to accept, but may be unsure how to do that. Where do we meet Jesus as we do our other friends? Prayer.

We can get caught up in the trappings of prayer and worry about doing it "correctly." Our friendship with Jesus is another relationship in our lives with the same movements we have with family members, spouses and friends. We talk and we listen. Prayer is conversation with our friend, Jesus, talking as we might with our friends and family members.

It's astonishing to realize that Jesus selected us to be his friends. "It was not you who chose me, but *I who chose you.*" We have been chosen to share our lives with Jesus as he shares his with us. It's a connection of joy. The good news, Jesus says, is joy for both of us. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete." But more than that, Jesus says that because he chose us, we are sent "to go and bear great fruit that will remain." Our role as Christians is to live out the teachings of Jesus. *"Love one another."*

It's easy to find tragedy and conflict everywhere. What is our part in bringing love to those in pain? His commandment to us is simple: *"Love one another."* He doesn't tell us how to vote, to earn money, even to pray. Just love one another, and *"remain in me."*

How do we take up this mantle he has given us? How can we shape our lives to follow Jesus' example of loving more closely? Maybe praying for or working to help the poor and marginalized around us. Perhaps it just means for us to lighten up in our own lives and remain in his love. It could be as simple as being kinder to those around us. Stop being crabby and judgmental. Not assume that my way is the correct way, that my beliefs are true, no matter how ardently I believe them. We accept the fierce love of Jesus by following his request for us to go and bear fruit that will remain. His final words to us echo in our lives: *Love one another.* We bear fruit every day by sharing the love we have been given and carrying it throughout our days and lives.

Loving Jesus, help me to humbly accept your love for me. Let me feel it deep in my heart and trust in it enough to be bold as I carry it into my daily life. Soften my heart in my beliefs and let me listen to you and to others around me. Help me to remain in your love.

M.M.W.

DIOCESAN PRAYER INTENTIONS: 5th May - 11th May

Sunday: Community of St Joseph, Copnor. **Monday:** Parish of St Laurence, Petersfield.

Tuesday: Parish of St Joseph, Tilehurst. **Wednesday:** Parish of Our Lady and St Edmund, Abingdon.

Thursday: All who decorate our churches; Channel Islands Liberation Day. **Friday:** Community of Our Lady, Fleet.

Saturday: Diocesan Safeguarding Committee.

Please pray for: Esmé Coveney, Rita Lane, Tom Wilkins, Margaret Williams, Patrick Arnold, Sheila Muir, Sheila Roberts, Mary Hathaway, Christopher Brown, Lisa Ramage, Mervyn Owen, Bernard Ivinson, Fiona Hilleard, Carol Keenan, Mary Oak, Tony Fabian, Sile Monnelly, Helen O'Connell, Ben and Frances Dunne, Robert Williams, Simon and Victoria Rowney, Douglas Manning, Guy Foa, Diane Mahoney, Sarah Viney and Diane Gan. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Joseph Burdett, James Daly, John Robinson, Jonathan Griffin and Pamela Lytle. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace.

The **ANDOVER FOODBANK** would like to thank everyone who has donated to us in recent weeks, we are incredibly grateful. These are the items that are currently needed: **Tinned Tomatoes; Long Life Fruit Juice; Long Life Milk; Tinned Fruit; Toothbrushes (Urgent); Washing Up Liquid (Urgent); Deodorant; Shampoo (Urgent) and Cleaning Spray.** Our opening hours are Monday - Friday 9.30 - 12.30 and donations can be brought to the door, left in the collecting boxes in the porch or can be put in the collection boxes at all the local supermarkets. Thank you.

11th and 12th May - Seventh Sunday of Easter

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK 7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The remaining apostles and about one hundred and twenty others stood around Peter. He had an announcement to make. It concerned the replacement of their former companion, Judas, the “guide to those who arrested Jesus”, the one who Jesus refers to as the “son of destruction” in the gospel for today. From our modern perspective, it seems that Peter proceeded much like the chair of a meeting. He quoted the “by-laws”: “The replacement must be one who had been with them from the baptism of John to the day that Jesus was taken up from us.” Two men were nominated for the position; Joseph called Barsabbas, or Justus, and Matthias. They drew lots, and Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.

Joseph, the man not chosen to be one of the twelve, was nevertheless, truly a blessed person. He had been with Jesus and the apostles during Jesus’ entire public life. It is possible that he felt some disappointment when he was not chosen. All of us share with him some instance when we feel a sense of loss when we are not selected for a position, or rejected for membership in an organization.

When we put these situations in perspective, as Joseph must have done, we see the obvious blessings that God continues to shower upon us. We may even see more clearly what our true mission in life is. All is never lost; as the psalm for today reminds us, “. . . forget not his benefits.”

Parts of the second reading (1 Jn 4:11-16) often recur in Christian hymns, on banners, and in Christian discourse in general. This short passage ends in a rational, eloquent summary: “God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.” Whether sung, quoted, or contemplated each day in prayer, the message is complex, yet direct. Love, and remain in the presence of the Lord. This is a joyful and gentle reminder. How can we keep from living this message?

Imagine the upturned face of Jesus as he prays the one long prayer to the Father that makes up the entire gospel for this Sunday. This moment in Jesus’ life reflects not only his love for the Father, but also, his one-ness with him. Jesus also prays that we will be one with him. We are no longer of, or belonging to the world; we remain in it, now protected by God from the evil one.

Jesus prayed, “As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.” We are consecrated by Jesus in the truth. Spread the message that God and his truth is love, and whoever remains in love, remains in God. We have been given not only a sense of belonging with God, but also a mission to be in the world to spread his word. We do have a mission for him, with him, and in him.

T.Q.

DIOCESAN PRAYER INTENTIONS: 12th May - 18th May

Sunday: Diocesan Communications Office. **Monday:** Portuguese Chaplaincies.

Tuesday: Evangelisation Strategy Teams in the Diocese.

Wednesday: :Diocesan Department for Educational Chaplaincies. **Thursday:** Carmelites (O. C arm.) in the Diocese.

Friday: Parish of Our Lady of Mercy and St Joseph, Lymington.

Saturday: Community of St John the Evangelist, Lee-on-Solent.

Exposition before the Blessed Sacrament will be at 5.30pm on the first Saturday of each month (before the 6.00pm Mass), and before Mass on the first Friday on each month.

Confessions will be from 5.30pm to 5.45pm each Saturday or you can ring the office to make an appointment.

ROTATIONS CHARITY SHOP, Newbury Street, Whitchurch.

The parishioners and friends of St John Fisher Church will once again be running the Rotations Charity Shop for Parish Funds from Friday 24th May to Thursday 20th June.

If you have never visited the shop in London Street before, I suggest to make a trip during this time - it is a treasure trove of great bargains and the stock is constantly being replenished!

We would love to receive any of your unwanted items, there will be a box at the back of St John Fisher Church, or you can drop your items off at the office in Andover - after 13th May and when the Office is open.

(Please don't abandon items in the porch at Andover or outside the office door!)

All good condition items and unwanted gifts accepted, but no electrical goods, child car seats or cycle helmets please.

Please only donate things that you would be willing to buy yourself!

Please note: There will be NO after Sunday Mass refreshments in the hall after Sunday Mass on Sunday 5th May.

A repeat request - PLEASE DO NOT PARK DOWN THE CENTRE OF EITHER CAR PARK, OUTSIDE THE CHURCH PORCH OR ON DOUBLE YELLOW LINES.

MASS TIMES AND INTENTIONS FROM 27TH APRIL - 17TH MAY

Confessions will be from 5.30pm to 5.45pm each Saturday or you can ring the office to make an appointment.

Sat. 27th Andover Mass 6.00pm *Mary Smyth RIP - Anniversary*

Sunday 28th April - Fifth Sunday of Easter

Whitchurch Mass 9.00am *For the People of the Parish*

Farleigh School Mass 10.00am -

Andover Mass 10.30am *The Robinson Family*

Mon. 29th Andover Mass 10.00am *Paul McCarthy RIP*

Tue. 30th Andover Mass 10.00am *Esmé Kelly RIP - Birthday Memoriam*

Andover - Healing Prayers 6.30pm - 7.00pm

Wed. 1st May *No Mass or Service*

Thur. 2nd Whitchurch Mass 10.00am *Marie Maclure RIP*

Friday 3rd May *Exposition from 9.40am*

Andover Mass 10.00am *Harry Lane RIP*

Sat. 4th Syro Malabar Mass 2.30pm -

Saturday 4th May *Exposition before Mass, from 5.30pm*

Andover Mass 6.00pm *Peter Ging - for Strength*

Sunday 5th May - Sixth Sunday of Easter

Whitchurch Mass 9.00am *For the Sick of the Parish*

No Farleigh Mass -

Andover Mass 10.30am *Serge Searle - Birthday Blessings*

No after Mass refreshments this Sunday in Andover.

Mon. 6th Andover Mass 10.00am *Jonathan Griffin RIP*

Tue. 7th Andover Mass 10.00am *Bernadette Coveney RIP*

Andover - Healing Prayers 6.30pm - 7.00pm

Wed. 8th Vigil Mass for the Ascension of the Lord in Whitchurch at 7.00pm

Thursday 9th - Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord - A Holy Day of Obligation

Andover Mass 9.30am *Frid Brender - for health and strength*

Andover Mass 7.00pm *For the People of the Parish*

Friday 10th Andover Mass 10.00am *Maureen Harris RIP*

Congratulations to Rory Brown and Anaiah Rodrigues who are to be baptised this weekend.

Sat. 11th Andover Mass 6.00pm *Valeska Noronha - Birthday Blessings*

Sunday 12th May - Seventh Sunday of Easter

Whitchurch Mass 9.00am *For the People of the Parish*

Farleigh School Mass 10.00am -

Andover Mass 10.30am *Derek Plunkett RIP - Anniversary*

Sat. 11th / Sun. 12th
2nd Collection for the Catholic
Communications Network.
NB We cannot claim Gift Aid
on this collection.

Mon. 13th Andover Mass 10.00am

Tue. 14th Andover Mass 10.00am *Freddie Flood RIP - Anniversary*

Andover - Healing Prayers 6.30pm - 7.00pm

Wed. 15th *No Mass or Service*

Thur. 16th Whitchurch Mass 10.00am

Fri. 17th Andover Mass 10.00am

Advance notice: The Parish Office will be closed from 12 noon on 2nd May to 8.30am on 13th May inclusive.