



Parish of St Peter & The Good Shepherd Bearsted & Harrietsham

A Member of Bearsted Area Churches Together



Newsletter

St Peter's Church, Button Lane, Bearsted, Maidstone, ME15 8NJ

Church of The Good Shepherd, Rectory Lane (off East Street), Harrietsham, ME17 1HS

Contact us:

Parish Priest: Father Geoffrey Pointer: 01622 736100, email: parishpriest@catholic-bearsted.org.uk

Parish Deacon: Reverend Cyril Durbin: 01622 630055, email: cyrildurbin@btinternet.com

St Peter's Hall Bookings: 07919 084730

More information:

Parish Website: www.catholic-bearsted.org.uk

Diocesan Website: www.rcsouthwark.co.uk

The Catholic Church in England and Wales: www.catholicchurch.org.uk

Prayer: www.life4seekers.co.uk; www.holyspiritinteractive.net

Catholic Schools in our local area:

St Francis' Primary, Queen's Road, Maidstone ME16 0LB (Telephone: 771540)

The Holy Family Primary, Bicknor Road, Park Wood, Maidstone ME15 9PS (Telephone: 756778)

St Simon Stock Catholic Secondary, Oakwood Park, Maidstone ME16 0JP (Telephone: 754551)

Year B

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A)

21st December 2014

FAITH IN FOCUS: HOW NEAR IS YOUR GOD?

Every coin has two sides. So if we say that Paris is a long way from London, we can also say that, compared with Hong Kong, it really is quite near.

The same is true of God. When we say something about God, we can often say the very opposite and it will also be true. We have to back up what we say, so that we don't make God too small. We can never have God "taped". God is much bigger than anything our minds can cope with, no matter how clever we might be.

So as Christmas is almost upon us and Advent draws to a close, we could talk about the vastness of God. We could celebrate in our liturgy how God is the supreme, cosmic creator, the mighty and all-powerful Lord of the universe who is so far above us that we are nothing more than grains of sand to him. But we don't. Instead, we say the very opposite. We recognise that God is very near, nearer to us, in fact, than even our closest companion. We marvel as the angel tells Mary that the Lord is with her. We wonder in awe as King David builds a house where the Lord will dwell in the midst of the Jews. And we are silenced by Paul's breath-taking news that the mystery hidden from the beginning of time is now revealed. We can know it if we know Jesus.

We can speak of the "transcendence" of God, meaning that God is beyond our grasp, essentially "other" and outside our realm of activity. But we can, and today do, recognise God as "immanent", very close to us, concerned with our daily problems, accessible and living on our street and in our parish. But no matter how near God is, we have to let him in. When the angel told Mary that the Lord was with her, she had to consent to that intimate closeness by saying, "Let what you have said be done to me." God wants to be that close to us too. We have a choice this Christmas. We can celebrate just the Nativity, the historical birth of Jesus. Or we can celebrate the Incarnation, the taking on of flesh and blood by Jesus. The difference is that the Nativity has already happened, whereas with the Incarnation, the flesh and blood that Jesus now longs to inhabit is yours and mine. But, like Mary, we've got to let him in. *(Author unknown)*

COFFEE MORNING at GOOD SHEPHERD After Mass today: a rare chance to stay awhile and meet fellow parishioners.

READERS at GOOD SHEPHERD Will readers please now introduce the entry antiphon at the beginning of Mass, and also the communion antiphon. Ted Holland will be speaking at Mass this Sunday about this and a parish readers' day in the new year.

PENANCE SERVICE at St Francis', Maidstone, 7.30pm, this **Monday, 22nd December.**



DIARY for the TWO WEEKS BEGINNING 21st DECEMBER 2014
(Masses marked '(H)' are at Harrietsham)

✕ **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B)** ✕

O Oriens: O Radiant Dawn ✕ Day of prayer for expectant mothers

Sun 21st	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: Jim Kelly RIP
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass: Ray Smith RIP
		10.30am	✕ Mass: Pro Populo
		6.00pm	Family Christmas Celebration
Mon 22nd	<i>O Rex Gentium: O King of all the nations</i>	7.00pm	✕ Mass
Tues 23rd	<i>O Emmanuel: God is with us</i>	10.00am	✕ Mass: Madge Shea RIP
Wed 24th	Christmas ✕ Eve		

✕ **The NATIVITY of THE LORD** ✕

Christmas Day

	Wednesday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30pm	✕ Mass during the Night: Celebrant's Intention <i>(Preceded by Carols)</i>
Thurs 25th	Thursday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Dawn Mass: Tom Moses RIP
		10.30am	✕ Day Mass: Rose Julia Greenrod RIP
Fri 26th	St Stephen	10.00am	✕ Mass
Sat 27th	St John	<i>5:00-5:30pm</i>	<i>Confessions</i>

✕ **The HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH (B)** ✕

Sun 28th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: Bob and Winifred Dring RIP
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✕ Mass: Margaret and Len Richardson RIP
Mon 29th	St Thomas of Canterbury	7.00pm	✕ Mass
Tues 30th	Christmas Octave	10.00am	✕ Mass: David and Nancy Mendes RIP
Wed 31st	Christmas Octave	(H) 10.00am	✕ Mass
Thu 1st Jan	MARY the HOLY MOTHER of GOD	10.00am	✕ Mass
Fri 2nd	SS Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen	10.00am	✕ Mass
Sat 3rd	The Most Holy Name of Jesus	<i>5:00-5:30pm</i>	<i>Confessions</i>

✕ **THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD** ✕

Sun 4th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: Molly and David McCafferty RIP
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass: Ray Smith RIP
		10.30am	✕ Mass: Pro Populo

YOUTH GROUP *Family Christmas Celebration this Sunday, 21st December, at 6pm (final rehearsal at 4.15).* • We welcome young people aged 10 – 15; older teenagers welcome to join in as young leaders.

CHOIR NEWS Last rehearsal before Christmas: Today, after 10.30am Mass. All are welcome! If you play any musical instrument please join us for our Family Christmas Celebration this Sunday (21st) at 6pm (*rehearsal at 4.15 pm*) and again at our Christmas Day Mass at St Peter's at 10.30am (meet at 10 for warm-up). For more information speak to Bob or Erika (telephone 739361).

PLEASE PRAY...

- *With the Holy Father for December: Christmas, hope for humanity: that the birth of the Redeemer may bring peace and hope to all people of good will; and that parents may be true evangelizers, passing on to their children the precious gift of faith.*
- *For all the sick and for all who are unwell at home or in our care homes, especially Cyril Adam, Arthur Hogben, John Kilby and Barbara Casey; for those recently dead; for all those whose anniversaries occur about now; and for all our relatives and friends.*
- *For the children and staff murdered in the Pakistan school massacre, that they may rest in peace; and for their grieving parents, relatives and school friends.*
- *For expectant mothers: may they be especially blessed during their weeks of waiting and be rewarded with the joy of new life.*
- *For a deeper trust and docility to the Holy Spirit among persons discerning a call to serve Christ as a priest, deacon or in the consecrated life.*

Thank you for your offerings last week to help run our parish: **£385.26** (Gift Aided, **£140.28**). ♦ The retiring collection to help with the cost of flowers and decorations at Christmas came to **£154.66**. ☺ The **collection at all Masses on Christmas Day** is parishioners' personal offering to their parish priest. In this diocese priests rely for most of their income on the offerings made at Christmas and Easter, so please be as generous as your means allow. Envelopes are available for this. Thank you. ♦ **Crib offerings** throughout the season are for the "Friends of the Holy Land", offering help to the poorest families in Bethlehem.

ADVENT APPEAL 2014 The Advent Appeal this year is for the **Maidstone Churches' Winter Shelter**. They are aiming to provide shelter for homeless people in Maidstone right now until 1st March. They are using seven churches in Maidstone between 7pm and 8am. They hope to support homeless people to move on to appropriate accommodation. This is a continuation of the successful project from last year. Please collect an envelope and return at one of the Christmas Masses.

GRAND CHRISTMAS DRAW 1st Prize: **£100 Cash** + 2nd Prize: **Turkey and Vegetables Voucher** + 3rd Prize: **Luxury Christmas Hamper** + 4th Prize: **£40 Oak on the Green Voucher** and other magnificent prizes. Tickets are still on sale. The draw will take place at the Family Christmas Celebration this Sunday, **21st December**.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS Fr Geoff and Deacon Cyril would like to thank all those who have sent Christmas cards and gifts.

NEWSLETTER There is no newsletter next week so Fr Geoff and Deacon Cyril send best wishes for a Holy and Happy Christmas. Thank you so much to all those who are contributing to the music, the liturgy and the decorations in our two churches at Bearsted and Harrietsham over the Christmas period. Mass will be offered for you all, as well as for those who give so much of their time and love to our parishioners and our property over the year.

WHAT'S ON CHRISTMAS TV THIS YEAR? Answer: Father Geoff (among others)! As part of our parish consultation on 'TV Streaming', we are setting up a demonstration at St Peter's to project the main Christmas services live onto the big TV in the parish room. It's not a broadcast, but shows the type of image we would be using if we go ahead with our plans to broadcast future services on the Internet. It will also allow those who, for whatever reason, may be sitting out in the parish room, to take a fuller part in the Mass as it happens. Do please let us know your thought on the proposal to broadcast our Sunday service on the Internet for the benefit of those at home who can't get to church. A form is not needed, just write your thoughts down and pass them to Father Geoff.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS 2015 Preparations begin in January. Application forms are **now available**. Parents who live in the parish with children who are baptized and in school Year 3 or above are invited to apply. A meeting will be called once we have received back the applications.