



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

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

Parish Deacon: Reverend Cyril Durbin: 01622 630055

St Peter's Hall Bookings: 07919 084730

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)

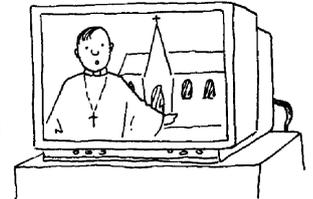
Parish Website and YouTube:
www.catholic-bearsted.org.uk

Year A

THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT

11th December 2016

FAITH IN FOCUS: SOAP OPERA GOD? Have you noticed in the TV soap operas that any time a character is introduced into the plot who has a religious side to them, they are nearly always portrayed as some sort of weird influence? They are usually elderly people who wander around quoting chapter and verse from the bible, interfering mothers-in-law ruining families, or impressionable people ending up with a nervous breakdown. Maybe this is because the scriptwriters have bought into all the extremes of religiosity and combined them into individual people. Certainly, you never see a happy family on its way back from church on Sunday; this wouldn't fit in with the media idea of the soap opera or the Church. Sometimes Christians can be guilty of giving this impression of God and religion. God becomes someone of whom they are basically frightened, a God who imposes strict rules and then sits back waiting to catch people out before returning to unleash awful torment on them.



Today's liturgy, and the season of Advent, shows that things are quite the opposite. We wait for the second coming of our God, because we are sure that God comes to set us free. Isaiah speaks about a desert blooming again, sick people being cured, and general gladness and festivity. In fact, the keyword for today's liturgy is "rejoice". Like the people in the scripture today, we too are blind, deaf and lame. There are areas of our lives that could be productive, but we continue to hobble along making do with what we are used to. The coming of Jesus is for us as well and it's intended as a liberation not a life sentence.

Advent summons us to yearn for God's coming, to live our lives with longing for his return among us, and to proclaim by the way we live that Jesus is the most important thing in our lives. Christianity is not some sort of club for repressed maniacs who fear their God, but a calling to enjoy God's favour and protection and to ache for its fulfilment in the heavenly kingdom. The Lord who is to come is not merely a baby smiling in a manger. He is the Lord of life and he wants us to enjoy it here and now. Despite what you see on the soaps.

Author unknown

RECOMMENDED for ADVENT The season of Advent has a twofold character: it is a time of preparation for Christmas, when Christ's first coming is remembered; and it is a time to direct mind and heart to await his second coming. Advent is, therefore, a time of devout and expectant delight. In the second phase of the season of Advent, from **17th December** (this coming Saturday), the liturgy is more directly addressed to preparing to commemorate and celebrate the birth of Our Lord, and the readings at daily Mass reflect this. Try then to get to Mass during the week: there is so much beauty in the readings of this season. ♦ Celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation (confession): there will be a penance service at Maidstone on Monday **19th December** at 7.30pm. ♦ Download a daily meditation from the diocese: <http://eepurl.com/bF0b6P>.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS 2017 Applications have now closed. Preparations for those parents who have enrolled their children begin in January.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE TIMES Details of the times of the Christmas services across all the Christian churches in the Bearsted locality are ready for distribution. **Volunteers please!**

CAROLS ON THE GREEN Wednesday **14th December** at 7.30pm on Bearsted Green. All are welcome for this annual ecumenical pre-Christmas event. After at the Methodist Church for soup and bread.

COFFEE MORNING at GOOD SHEPHERD After Mass, next Sunday, **18th December**: back by popular demand, a rare chance to linger awhile, drink coffee and meet fellow parishioners.

CHRISTMAS POSTER Pick up a Knights of St Columba Christmas poster and display it in your window or other prominent position.

DIARY for WEEK BEGINNING 11th DECEMBER 2016
(Masses marked '(H)' are at Harrietsham)

✕ **THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT (A)** ✕

Sun 11th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: The Holy Souls
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✕ Mass: Donor's Intention
Mon 12th	Feria	7.00pm	✕ Mass: Fr Eamonn Whelan RIP
Tues 13th	St Lucy	10.00am	✕ Mass: Fr Robert Jennings RIP
Wed 14th	St John of the Cross	(H) 10.00am	✕ Mass: Deacon Braz Menezes RIP
Thu 15th	Feria	7.00am	✕ Mass
Fri 16th	Feria	10.00am	No Mass
Sat 17th	Feria • <i>O Sapientia: O Wisdom</i>	<i>5.00-5.30pm</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
✕ FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT (A) ✕			
Sun 18th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: The Holy Souls
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✕ Mass: The Holy Souls
• <i>O Adonai: O Sacred Lord</i>			

PARISH SOCIAL Thank you to those who supported our splendid pre-Christmas Quiz Night last Saturday. A grand time was had by all. Our thanks to our Quiz Master, MC and song-leader and those who organized publicity and catering. We made **£212.05** for The Maidstone Churches Christmas Appeal for the Homeless.

CHRISTMAS DRAW Tickets will continue to be available after all Masses: various magnificent prizes. All proceeds to parish music projects.

ADVENT APPEAL 2016 This year's appeal will be in aid of The Maidstone Churches' Winter Shelter. The Winter Shelter offers a warm welcome overnight for homeless people during the coldest months. Envelopes are now available, apologies for the delay. Please return by the end of Advent. Thank you. ★ Please see the notice about donations of **clothes** to the **Maidstone Day Care Centre**. Marie Quarman will collect throughout this month.

PLEASE PRAY...

- **With the Holy Father for December:** *that the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness and truth of the Gospel, which gives joy and hope to life.*
- **For all the sick** and for all who are unwell at home or in our care homes; for those who have died recently, especially Alan Flynn and Patricia Curtis, and for all those whose anniversaries occur about now; for all our relatives and friends, and the intentions on the notice board.
- **For all those caught up in the civil war in Yemen**, particularly those that are malnourished, sick or homeless. We ask that all those with power and influence will work together to make it possible to live in security and peace.

Thank you for your offerings last week to help run our parish: **£490.70** (gift aided, **£343.50**; weekly standing orders amount to **£149**). • **This Sunday** there is a retiring collection to help with the **cost of flowers and decorations at Christmas.**

PARISH FAMILY CAROLS Next Sunday, **18th December** at 6.00pm at St Peter's. Come and join us for a jolly good sing! Contributions from Children's Liturgy and Choir plus a reading or two. Anyone who would like to play in the band (any instrument) please let Bob Piggott know (736661 or bob_piggott@hotmail.co.uk). Please bring wrapped gifts for Maidstone Women's Refuge - children's toys or women's toiletries.

BEARSTED CHORAL SOCIETY CHRISTMAS 'CONCERT' at St Peter's, next Saturday, **17th December**, 7.30pm. Refreshments and raffle in the interval. Tickets £10, students free. Tickets from Bob Piggott after Mass or bob_piggott@hotmail.co.uk or 736661.

CARDS FOR PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE Please pick up a list of such prisoners; you may wish to contact them to offer comfort and support.

CATHEDRAL CAROL SERVICE The annual Cathedral Carol Service takes place this Thursday, **15th December**, 7.30pm at St George's Cathedral, Southwark. Visit: <https://t.co/dqVQAO22eM>.