



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

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT

18th December 2016

FAITH IN FOCUS: FULL OF THEMSELVES Time and time again in the bible we find that God acts in precisely the opposite way that we would have done. Over and over again God chooses the very person we would think of as most unsuitable. A man with a speech impediment becomes God's spokesman (Moses), a boy with a sling beats a giant (David), a child thrown down a well goes on to become leader (Joseph), and a woman succeeds in slaying a mighty warrior king (Judith).

So perhaps we shouldn't be surprised to see that when God makes the cosmic decision to come down onto earth, it is to two unlikely characters that he chooses to entrust the birth of his Son. Rather than choose to be born into some noble family where he would be sure of a safe life and an influence among the movers and shakers that would prove useful in preaching the gospel, Jesus allowed himself to be born of a young virgin girl and her carpenter boyfriend, to a common couple in a backyard stable.

The last thing you could say about Mary and Joseph is that they were full of themselves. Quite the reverse. But because they were not full of themselves they left room for God, and God has a flair for filling voids. It seems that God has a weakness for the poor, the humble and those with no one to stand up for them.

And what of us? Are we so full of our Christmas preparations, of what we are going to do, what we are going to buy, that we have lost sight of the Advent message of humble expectation? We cannot force God to come; we cannot fabricate Christmas joy. God can only come to us when we are aware of our void and of our need for him.

The best gift God could give us this Christmas would be to fill our lives as he filled the lives of Mary and Joseph. In order to make this happen, we have to be sure that we are not full of ourselves. At Christmas, only the poor, the hungry, and those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit, there can be no abundance of God. *Author unknown*



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

RECOMMENDED for ADVENT In the second (current) phase of the season of Advent, from **17th December**, 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 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 tomorrow, Monday **19th December**, at 7.30pm. ♦ Download a daily meditation from the diocese: <http://eepurl.com/bF0b6P>.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE TIMES Thank you to those who distributed the Christmas service sheets in the Bearsted locality. There is still one street left: Biddenden Close. If you live (near) there, please...

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

FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS 2017 Applications have now closed. Preparations for those parents who have enrolled their children begin in January. Parents will be informed of the details by email.

DIARY for WEEK BEGINNING 18th DECEMBER 2016
(Masses marked '(H)' are at Harrietsham)

✕ **FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT (A)** ✕

Sun 18th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: The Holy Souls
	Sunday • <i>O Adonai: O Sacred Lord</i>	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✕ Mass: The Holy Souls
		6.00pm	Family Carols
Mon 19th	<i>O Radix Jesse: O Root of Jesse</i>	7.00pm	✕ Mass: Eileen RIP
Tues 20th	<i>O Clavis David: O Key of David</i>	10.00am	✕ Mass: Canon Jack Madden RIP
Wed 21st	<i>O Oriens: O Radiant Dawn</i>	(H) 10.00am	✕ Mass: The Holy Souls
Thu 22nd	<i>O Rex Gentium: O King of all the nations</i>	7.00am	✕ Mass
Fri 23rd	<i>O Emmanuel: God is with us</i>	10.00am	✕ Mass: Ellen Walsh RIP
Sat 24th	<i>O Sapientia: O Wisdom</i>	5.00-5.30pm	Confessions
✕ The NATIVITY of THE LORD ✕ <i>Christmas Day</i>			
Sun 25th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: Jim Kelly RIP
		10.30pm	✕ Mass during the Night: Celebrant's Intention
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Dawn Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✕ Day Mass: Rose Julia Greenrod RIP

PARISH FAMILY CAROLS This 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.

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 Canon Jack Madden, and for all those whose anniversaries occur about now; for all our relatives and friends, and the intentions on the notice board. We pray for expectant mothers.
- **That the ceasefire in Aleppo will hold;** and also for God's protection for all those trying to escape the city to live in peace and safety.

Thank you for your offerings last week to help run our parish: **£407.49** (Gift Aided, **£224.00**; weekly standing orders, paid direct into our bank amount to **£134.00**). ♦ The retiring collection to help with the cost of flowers and decorations at Christmas amounted to **£144.09**. ☺ 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 will be shared between the "Friends of the Holy Land", offering help to the poorest families in Bethlehem, and "Crisis Fund in Southwark" to help support children, young people and families in immediate need.

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

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE The draw will take place **this Sunday** after Mass at St Peter's; mulled wine and mince pies will be served. Thank you to all those who have bought and sold tickets: good luck!

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. 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.