



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 B

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT

24th December 2017

FAITH IN FOCUS: FINAL ANSWER? "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you Do not be afraid, for you have found favour with God." Imagine for one moment, that instead of the Angel Gabriel speaking those words to Mary, that they had been spoken directly to you. How would you feel? It would of course be a life changing moment ... a moment filled both with great excitement and of great uncertainty. In that moment you would know that life would never be the same again. In that moment you would know that God had great plans for you. How must Mary have felt? It must have taken huge courage for her to agree to conceive God's Son. By saying 'yes' to God's plan she was allowing her whole life to be turned upside down. By saying 'yes' she was to turn her back on the security of the normal life she had planned with Joseph, her husband-to-be. God's call to Mary is what we refer to today as the "Annunciation" which means an announcement or a calling. There are other places in the Bible where we see people called unexpectedly from the normality of their hum-drum lives to serve God. The calling is always a two-way thing. God requires a response. Of course we don't have to respond to God's call if we don't want to. Mary didn't have to say 'yes' to God's plan. She could have declined and lived out her years in trouble free comfort.



God still calls people today. Sometimes the call is insistent, as many who have been called to religious vocation will testify. Often the call is less obvious, and yet we are told that God has called each of us, and that for each of us there is a role to play. We are favoured and chosen just as Mary was. The main difference is that Mary responded fully to her unique role, whilst we remain hesitant and half-hearted, plagued by doubts as to our worth. Answering God's call isn't a comfortable business. Answering God's call might involve difficult decisions and hardship; but it might also be hugely rewarding, exciting and invigorating. How do we see God's call? Do we see it as a great burden, or as a great gift? Although Mary was young and uneducated, she had the faith to see that what the Angel Gabriel was offering her in calling her for God was a great gift. The call is to us all. How does God call each of us? What talents skills and characteristics do we each possess that God can use? Advent is a time in which we can look for the ways in which God is calling us a time in which we can decide on the answer will give.

CHRISTMAS DAY Were you the parent who was asked by your child for a 'Hatchimal' at Christmas only to find that every single toy shop on the planet had sold out by the end of November? The tragedy of Christmas is that we are left feeling we have failed as parents, or as a spouse, or as friends, if we have not managed to buy those must-have presents, if we have missed somebody off the card list, or failed to create a Christmas day worthy of a centre fold in Harpers Bizarre. The media has turned Christmas into a frenzy of 'getting things right'. But despite 'consumerism gone mad', the nativity of Jesus is an event that still grips millions of people. The birth of Jesus heralds a new way of living for each and every new generation, and we are reminded of this significance every year at this time. Yes the lights and the tinsel have to come down, but let's remind ourselves to live the Christmas message of giving and caring, each and every day of the year. *C Bell*



NEWSLETTER There is no newsletter next week, so Fr Geoff and Deacon Cyril send best wishes for a Holy and Happy Christmas thanking parishioners for cards and gifts sent in. Fr Tim sends good wishes to us all, as does Fr Joseph, still in Rome as chaplain to the African community there. ✨ Thank you so much to all those 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, especially those unable to get to Mass these days, and to those who keep an eye on our property over the year. ★ Pick up a Knights of St Columba Christmas poster and display it in your window or other prominent position.

ADVENT APPEAL This year's Advent Appeal is in aid of The Maidstone Churches' Winter Shelter. Envelopes still available. Please return by the end of Advent. Thank you. ✨ *Maidstone Day Care Centre* would be very grateful if you could donate any of the following to help the homeless in Maidstone, mainly for men but also some women: · Winter clothes, including shoes and boots, coats, pants and socks, gloves, scarves, hats. · Sleeping bags and blankets. · Toiletries. Please leave any donations, clearly marked, in the parish room at St Peter's. Marie Quarman will continue to collect until week ending **28th January**. Thank you.

**DIARY for WEEK BEGINNING 24th DECEMBER 2017
(Masses marked '(H)' are at Harrietsham)**

✧ **FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT (B)** ✧

Sun 24th	Saturday	6.00pm	✧ Vigil Mass: Kathryn Nicol
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✧ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✧ Mass: Celebrant's Intention

✧ **The NATIVITY of THE LORD** ✧

Christmas Day

Sun 24th	Christmas Vigil	6.00pm	✧ Vigil Mass: Mariusz Koras RIP
Mon 25th	Christmas Dawn	(H) 8.45am	✧ Mass: Pro Populo
	Christmas Day	10.30am	✧ Mass: Rose Julia Greenrod RIP
Tues 26th	St Stephen	10.00am	✧ Mass: Margaret & Len Richardson RIP
Wed 27th	St John	(H) 10.00am	✧ Requiem Mass: David Smith
Thu 28th	The Holy Innocents	7.00am	✧ Mass: Sacha and his family
Fri 29th	St Thomas of Canterbury	10.00am	✧ Mass: Noell Byrne RIP
Sat 30th	Christmas Octave	<i>5.00-5.30pm</i>	<i>Confessions</i>

✧ **THE HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH (B)** ✧

Sun 31st	Saturday	6.00pm	✧ Vigil Mass: Jan Miotla RIP <i>Yvonne</i>
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✧ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✧ Mass: Kevin Mileedy RIP
Mon 1st Jan.	Mary, The Holy Mother of God	10.00am	✧ Mass: Mariusz Koras RIP
Tues 2nd	SS Basil and Gregory	10.00am	✧ Mass: Canon Anthony Ford RIP
Wed 3rd	Christmas Feria	(H) 10.00am	✧ Mass: Fr Roy Dunstan CRE RIP
Thu 4th	Christmas Feria	7.00am	✧ Mass: Fr Peter Madden RIP
Fri 5th	Christmas Feria	10.00am	✧ Mass: Fr Kevin Pelham RIP
Sat 6th	Christmas Feria	<i>5.00-5.30pm</i>	<i>Confessions</i>

✧ **The EPIPHANY of THE LORD** ✧

Sun 7th	Saturday	6.00pm	✧ Vigil Mass: Sister Sheila O'Hara RIP
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✧ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✧ Mass: Sacha and his family

FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS 2018 Applications have now closed. Preparations for those parents who have enrolled their children begin on **Friday 5th January** at 4pm. Parents will be updated by email.

PLEASE PRAY...

- **With the Holy Father for December** – that the elderly, sustained by families and Christian communities, may apply their wisdom and experience to spreading the faith and forming new generations. • **For January** – that Christians, and other religious minorities in Asian countries, may be able to practise their faith in full freedom.
- **For all the sick and for all who are unwell at home or in our care homes** especially Joan Hardings; for those who have died recently especially young Sacha Wilkinson, Canon Anthony Ford, Fr Peter Madden, Fr Roy Dunstan CRE and Fr Kevin Pelham; and for all those whose anniversaries occur about now (see below); for all our relatives and friends and for the intentions on the notice board.
- **Anniversaries this week** (St Peter's Lady Chapel memorial): ✧ Rose Greenrod, Winifred Sanity, Nicholas Newman, Anna Hale, Elizabeth Honywood, Vincent Coker, Winifred Scott and Irena Harrison. ✧

Thank you for your offerings last week to help run our parish: **£408.79** (Gift Aided, **£210.50**; weekly standing orders, paid direct into our bank amount to **£149.00**). ☺ 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 coming 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.

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE Results are on the notice board. **£740** has been raised for parish funds. Ian would like to thank parishioners for their generous support and those who kindly donated prizes. Our thanks to Ian for his tenacity. Congratulations to our winners!