



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: bearsted@rcaos.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

SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT

Bible Sunday

8th DECEMBER 2019

FAITH in FOCUS: CHOOSE a NEW DIRECTION We embark on a diet, and the days of lettuce and low calorie drinks loom gloomily. We embark on a fitness regime, and our subconscious whispers, "Fifteen more minutes under a warm duvet versus a jog round a freezing park ... I know what I'd choose!". In today's gospel, John the Baptist preaches "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand." The idea of 'repentance' fills us with about as much excitement as a cold shower on a winter's morning, but it doesn't have to be like that. Diets, fitness regimes and repentance all have one thing in common... we emerge as new people as a result of choosing a new direction. Repentance doesn't mean throwing ourselves round in fits of Catholic guilt, it simply means having a change of heart, and becoming new and better individuals as a result. There are areas in all our lives that can be improved or turned around. The idea of repentance is actually quite exciting.



John's Advent call for a change of heart is for each and every one of us. We might think we are good enough as we are, but that's probably how the Pharisees and Sadducees in today's reading also felt. True enough they turned up for John's baptism, but had they really turned up in a spirit of repentance? John is clearly suspicious of their motivation, and challenges them to prove their commitment. Declaring our intention to change is all well and good, but our commitment must also 'bear fruit' ... show results.

At this time of year, every year, we are asked to change our lives. For the less optimistic amongst us, the idea reminds us of new year resolutions; easily made, easily broken and all a little bit pointless. John's message is a tough one. Changing our lives is far from easy. One of the problems of course is that when we try to change we usually rely solely on our own willpower, which is notorious for letting us down. John the Baptist reminds us that when we are baptized in the name of Jesus we will receive the Holy Spirit, a divine power that will help us towards God when our will power fails. All we have to do is ask and keep on asking.

Change is not beyond any of us however much you think it probably is. John might have given the Pharisees and Sadducees a hard time but in truth the message is clear. "There is none so lost, they cannot be found, none so helpless that their life cannot be changed." *Chapel Bell*

BIBLE SUNDAY, today, highlights the importance of the sacred scriptures in Christian living. We will be asking our Ministers of the Word (Readers) to renew the commitment to their ministry this weekend. ★ If you feel you would like to offer your service as a Minister of the Word, please let Fr Geoffrey or Deacon Cyril know.

THE SEASON of ADVENT (From the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*) Advent has a twofold character, for it is a time of preparation for the Solemnities of Christmas, in which the First Coming of the Son of God to humanity is remembered, and likewise a time when, by remembrance of this, minds and hearts are led to look forward to Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, Advent is a period of devout and expectant delight. ♦ **Do try to get to Mass during the week:** there is so much beauty in the readings of this season. For **Advent Reflections** visit the Diocesan Stewardship Team: <http://www.southwarkdsc.org.uk/>.

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!**

ADVENT APPEAL This year's Advent Appeal will be in aid of the Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter for the homeless. Envelopes for your donations are now available. Thank you.

THE END IS NIGH...! The last date for buying **GRAND CHRISTMAS DRAW** tickets and for returning your counterfoils and money is **today!** There are a lot of tickets out there that have not been returned. This is our major annual fund-raising event for parish funds, so please let Ian have them as soon as possible. There are major prizes to be won: our thanks to those who have left some rather nice prizes already!

DIARY for WEEK BEGINNING 8th DECEMBER 2019
(Masses and Devotions marked '(H)' are at Harrietsham)

✠ **SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT (A)** ✠
Bible Sunday

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| Sun 8th | Saturday | 6.00pm | ✠ Vigil Mass: Pro Populo |
| | Sunday | (H) 8.45am | ✠ Mass: Holy Souls |
| | | 10.30am | ✠ Mass: Holy Souls |
| Mon 9th | The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. | 7.00pm | ✠ Mass |
| Tue 10th | Feria | 10.00am | ✠ Mass <i>(followed by Adoration until 11.30am)</i> |
| Wed 11th | Feria | (H) 10.00am | ✠ Mass |
| Thu 12th | Feria | 7.00am | ✠ Mass |
| Fri 13th | St Lucy | 10.00am | ✠ Mass: Catherine's Viva |
| Sat 14th | St John of the Cross | 5-5.30pm | Confessions |

✠ **THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT (A)** ✠
Gaudete Sunday

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|----------|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| Sun 15th | Saturday | 6.00pm | ✠ Vigil Mass: Mass of the Angels |
| | | 7.30pm | <i>Bearsted Choral Society Concert</i> |
| | Sunday | (H) 8.45am | ✠ Mass: Pro Populo |
| | | 10.30am | ✠ Mass: Hilary Ashdowne RIP |
| | | 4.00pm | Baptism, Margo Currin |

COMING SOON We are thinking of reviving a previous custom of offering coffee after Mass at St Peter's on Friday mornings. ☺ We'll give it a try on **20th December**.

FIRST COMMUNIONS The next session for the children will be on **Friday 10th January** at St Peter's.

PLEASE PRAY...

- *In the light of the upcoming General Election: for those seeking election, for us whom they seek to represent, and for the country during this time of political change. May the Lord counsel our elected representatives and guide them in the ways of justice, integrity and respect for all, especially the unborn and the vulnerable.*
- *With the Holy Father for December: for the future of the very young, that every country take the measures necessary to prioritize the future of the very young, especially those who are suffering.*
- *For all the sick and for all who are unwell at home or in our care homes, especially Terry Kinsman and Peter Walter; for those who have died recently; for all those whose anniversaries occur about now (see below); for all our relatives and friends and those who have asked for prayers.*
- *Anniversaries (St Peter's Chapel memorial): ✠ Frank Sanity, Reginald Boncey, Florence Fountain, Anne Murray, Millicent Weightman and Bernard Brennan. ✠*

Thank you for your offerings last week to help run our parish: **£367.40** (of which, **£150.75** was **Gift Aided**; in addition, weekly standing orders paid direct into our bank amount to **£185.00**). ♦ **This weekend** there will be a retiring collection to help with the cost of **flowers and decorations** at Christmas.

GENERAL ELECTION A statement from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales was given by our archbishop on the coming General Election; copies were attached last week. Spare copies are available. See the noticeboard.

THE YEAR OF THE WORD In partnership with Bible Society, the Year of the Word focuses on celebrating, living and sharing God's word throughout the Catholic Church in England and Wales until the end of December 2020. Pick up a booklet 'The God who Speaks' for more information, or visit: <http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/>.

THURSDAY MORNING MASS As from the New Year, Mass on a Thursday morning will be discontinued. Apologies for any inconvenience.

COMING UP:

- **FINANCE COMMITTEE:** after 7pm Mass, this **Monday** (transferred solemnity of The Immaculate Conception).
- **Bearsted Choral Society**, Saturday **14th December** at St Peter's, 7.30pm; see poster.
- **Carols on the [Bearsted] Green**, Wednesday **18th December**.
- **Family Carols**, **19th December**, 6pm. at St Peter's.
- **Good Shepherd Coffee**, after Sunday Mass on **22nd December**.