



# PARISH OF WOOLHAMPTON

Diocese of Portsmouth - Served by the Benedictine Monks of Douai Abbey

[www.douaiparish.org.uk](http://www.douaiparish.org.uk)

*Douai Abbey and St Mary's, RG7 5TQ*

*St Bernadette's, Pangbourne RG8 7JL St Luke's, Theale RG7 5AS*

*Parish Priest: Fr Alban Hood OSB*

*Tel: 0118-971-5350 mobile: 07592 549742 [ahood@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:ahood@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)*

*Parish Administrator: Kathryn Garden*

*Tel: 0118-971-5350 [woolhampton@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:woolhampton@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)*

*Safeguarding Minister: Kate Burke*

*Tel: 0118-984 2166 [safeguarding.wool@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding.wool@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)*

## 19 NOVEMBER 2023

### 33<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

Prov 31:10-13,19-20,30-31 *A perfect wife—who can find her?*

Psalm 127 Response *O blessed are those who fear the Lord.*

1 Thess 5:1-6 *Let not the Day of the Lord overtake you like a thief.*

Matthew 25:14-30 *You have been faithful in small things; come and join in your master's happiness.*

### THIS WEEK

**Saturday 18 November St Luke's 5.30 pm**

**Sunday 19 November St Bernadette's 9.45 am**  
*(followed by Adoration)*

**Abbey Church 10.30 am**  
*(Mass Intention: John Christopher Ward, RIP)*

**Mon 13 November Solemnity of St Edmund, King & Martyr,  
Patron of Douai Community**

**Abbey Church 11:30am**  
*(Mass Intention: Olivia Lander, RIP)*

**Tue 21– Sat 25 Nov Abbey Church 7.45 am**

All are welcome to daily services in Douai Abbey Church:

**6.20am Morning Office (Matins & Lauds)**

**12.45pm Midday Prayer**

**6.00pm Vespers 8.00pm Compline**

### **THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession)**

By arrangement – please email Fr Alban, or at the following places:

Abbey Church: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 6.30pm -7.00pm

St Luke's: Saturday 4.45pm – 5.15pm

St Bernadette's: Sunday 9.00am – 9.30am

### **Please pray for the sick and housebound of our parish:**

Monica Adams · Patricia Brennikmeyer · Pat Campbell · Mary Cox  
Frank Ferris · Marigold Norman · Donald and Babs O'Sullivan · Mary  
Overington · Jill Rowley

### **Please pray for those who have died, especially**

**Frank Flynn (St Bernadette's), Cecilia Primavesi (St Luke's) and  
Michael Delaney (Abbey). Cecilia's funeral will be at  
St Luke's Church on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November at 10:00am**

### **MESSAGE FROM FATHER ALBAN**

Dear Parishioners,

This Sunday's gospel is about investment and return. In today's gospel Jesus talks about three people who were given different talents. He commends the first two because they used their talents. And he condemns the third because he buried his talent. What is a talent? We all have them. At the time of Jesus a 'talent' was a unit of commercial weight. Some scholars think that a talent was the equivalent of twenty years' salary for a typical worker; a huge amount so even the third servant with one talent is entrusted with a significant sum of money.

Like those servants in today's gospel God gives to each of us a different amount of talents, in proportion to our abilities. We may consider this unfair that some have more, and others less. We may compare ourselves unfavourably with others, yet it is important to remember where these gifts and talents come from - they come from God. He has given them to us to use for a relatively short time – our span of life on this earth. He has invested them in us, in the hope that will make best use of them. It is important also to remember that God creates us uniquely – so each of us has

something distinctive to contribute that no-one else has. It may take us a while to discover what that something, that talent, is.

God doesn't care about status, popularity, or appearances. He cares about the sort of people we are, and whether or not we are making best use of the talents he has given us. He wants us to use them for the good of others, not to just bury them or keep them to ourselves. God has a special purpose for each one of us. We were created specifically to be something and someone. Not everyone is destined to be Prime Minister or an astronaut. Not everyone has the gift to be a beautiful singer, poet, or an artist. But each of us can be something much greater.... a Saint!

Talking of saints, on Monday 20th November, we in the monastic community celebrate the Solemnity of our patron, St Edmund, King and Martyr. Mass will be celebrated in the Abbey Church at 11.30am, to which you are all invited.

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours devotedly,

*Fr Alban OSB*

### **ADORATION AT ST BERNADETTE'S**

There will be Adoration of The Blessed Sacrament after Mass at St Bernadette's Church this Sunday. Fr Alban will be available to hear Confessions at this time.

### **WELCOME IN BAPTISM**

We welcome in baptism Josephine Ebbetts, who will receive the sacrament this Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> November, at St Mary's Church. Please pray for her and her parents, Juliet and Ben, as they begin their journey of faith.

### **'RED WEDNESDAY' APPEAL**

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November is 'Red Wednesday', when the world's persecuted Christians will be remembered and prayed for in a special way. We are asked to make our support visible by wearing red in solidarity with Christians who suffer for their faith.

Next weekend there will be a special collection for [Aid To The Church In Need](#) who is hoping to raise £100K for Africa where Christians are displaced and suffering trauma because of targeted violence. [Can you help raise £100K4Africa?](#) Your gift, whatever you can afford, will make a huge difference.

## PARISH ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

The Parish will celebrate the beginning of Advent with a Carol Service at St Bernadette's Church on Sunday **3<sup>rd</sup> December**, starting at 4pm. Following the service of Advent carols and readings, featuring our young musicians, there will be seasonal refreshments in the Dorman Room.

## CAROL SERVICE PRACTICE

If you would like to sing with the choir at the Carol Service, there will be a practice in the church at St Bernadette's on Tuesday **28<sup>th</sup> November** at 8pm. Please come and join us if you can, you will be most welcome.

## CAFOD ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CRISIS APPEAL

Donate to CAFOD's Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal at [cafod.org.uk/ipc](https://cafod.org.uk/ipc) or call 0303 303 3030 to support those affected and get funds to local trusted experts in Gaza and southern Israel who have been working alongside communities helping those most in need. Your donation will help support aid workers providing urgent humanitarian aid including food, water and emergency shelter to those in need. Thank you for your prayers."

## PARISH OF WOOLHAMPTON: THE GOSPEL IN 30 MINUTES

Everyone is welcome to join us via Zoom on Tuesday evenings from 6.00pm-6.30pm to learn about and discuss the forthcoming Sunday Gospel. We encourage young people from the parish to join us - we look forward to seeing you. Zoom link is [here](#). (or use Zoom Meeting ID 750 7926 0060 Passcode q4uG1k).

## 'ENGAGING THE DISENGAGED'

There are a few spaces left for anyone wishing to attend the online seminar with leading evangelist Sherry Weddell on Tuesday **21<sup>st</sup> November**. The seminar provides an opportunity for people to explore how Catholics can fulfil their mission to bring all to Christ. Tickets are priced at £10. More information can be found [HERE](#).

## ADoRE MINI-RETREAT

On Saturday **25<sup>th</sup> November**, from 10:00am to 1:00pm, there is an opportunity to participate in a free mini-retreat morning on Zoom that will explain more about sharing our testimony and praying with people, using the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This month's theme is '*Rivers of living water – being a channel of Jesus' blessing*' and includes Mass, Adoration, Praise, Prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and inspiring guest speaker Russ Fairman. Please register for the Zoom meeting in advance. More information can be found at [www.altonrenewal.com](http://www.altonrenewal.com).

## **PASTORAL AREA ADVENT RETREAT**

This will be at Our Lady of Lourdes, Hungerford, on Saturday **2<sup>nd</sup> December** starting at 10.00am and concluding with Mass at 4.00pm and will be led by Fr Thomas Kleinschmidt, OMV. All will be most welcome. Please bring something for a bring and share lunch.

## **MISSIO 2024 CALENDAR**

Missio, the Pope's charity for world mission, has produced 2024 calendars which are now available at the back of our parish churches – please take one!

## **FILM: 'BEYOND UTOPIA'**

The film *Beyond Utopia* (15) is a gripping documentary film from the Sundance Festival that follows a Christian pastor on a mission to help North Koreans fleeing to safety. It is playing at Wallingford Corn Exchange Cinema, Market Place, OX10 OEG this coming Monday 20th, Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd at 7:30pm. For more details, watch the trailer and to book, visit: [cornexchange.org.uk/whats-on/beyond-utopia/](https://cornexchange.org.uk/whats-on/beyond-utopia/).

## **THE CHURCH AS GOD'S FAITHFUL PEOPLE**

In an intervention delivered recently at the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis highlights the description of the Church as God's faithful people, infallible in believing. The Pope said, "I like to think of the Church as this simple and humble people who walk in the presence of the Lord (the faithful people of God). This is the religious meaning of our faithful people. And I say faithful people so as not to fall into the many ideological approaches and schemes with which the reality of the people of God is "reduced". Simply faithful people, or also, "God's holy faithful people" on the way, saint and sinner. And this is the Church".

You can read the full translated transcript at [Vatican News](https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-news/news/2023/12/23-12-2023-synod-pope-francis-the-church-as-gods-faithful-people.html).

## **FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND CONCERT**

A concert by the London Welsh Male Voice Choir raising funds for Friends of the Holy Land, featuring Margaret Keys & Anthony Stuart Lloyd, takes place on Thursday **14<sup>th</sup> December**, at Our Lady of Victories Church, Kensington. There is the opportunity to join them for a Palestinian-themed buffet pre-concert (£50) or tickets for the concert only (£30). More details of what promises to be a wonderful evening of virtuoso singing and entertainment can be found at: [www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/Event/christmas-concert-2023](https://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/Event/christmas-concert-2023)

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# PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT

*November 2023*

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It has been over a year since I began as your Parish priest, and I thought it would be helpful for us all to reflect on the past year, and to look forward to the year ahead.

Last November there was a meeting to discuss the Diocesan 10-year-plan and its possible implications for us, especially given the fact that Woolhampton is an Incorporated parish and not diocesan. Although we contribute financially to the diocese, our finances are managed by the Douai Abbey Parishes' Trust, rather than the diocese. This means that our parish would not be able to contribute to the proposed scheme of having one financial committee for the whole of our Pastoral area.

In the past there have always been two priests to serve our parish, but now I am the only priest, and it became clear that some changes would be needed to enable me to serve the parish effectively. Sadly, it became necessary to discontinue the 8.30am Mass at St Mary's. The time of the Abbey Sunday Mass was brought forward to 10.30am, which has made it possible to introduce coffee after Mass to enable the congregation, and the monks, to get to know one another better. This is working well, and the added attraction of a bread and cake sale after Mass is much appreciated.

We are most fortunate to have an extremely gifted and effective Parish Administrator in Kathryn Garden, who joined us last September. We are also very blessed to have the professional services of Tom Gallagher, our Parish accountant. I am grateful, too, for Greg Primavesi and Dick Croker at St Luke's and Terry Cahill at St Bernadette's, who look after the maintenance of both these churches, and to Kate Burke, our Safeguarding lead who is so diligent and helpful.

Some of the highlights for me of the past year have been the following: Firstly, our Advent Carol service at St Bernadette's. Secondly, the Confirmation of our young people at Portsmouth in June and the wonderful course which prepared them, led by Lucy Gallagher and Anne-Marie McBrien. Then, various social events, such as the well-attended Quiz Night held in October, the Parish

Cream Tea in July, and the recent Race Night to raise funds for our parish charity, to say nothing of the fund-raising undertaken to send some of our young people to World Youth Day in Lisbon in August.

There are many unsung heroes and heroines in our parish, who do so much for us quietly, and behind the scenes. I'm thinking of our sacristans, Sue Edwards, Monica Morris, Sam and Anna Fernandes, our musicians, especially Trefor Edwards and the choir at St Bernadette's, those who prepare the coffee and refreshments after Mass, draw up rotas and our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, who regularly take Holy Communion to our sick and housebound, and to those generous people who give of their time to count the Sunday collections. I'm also most grateful to our altar servers, welcomers, flower arrangers and catechists for our Baptism and First Holy Communion courses.

It is, however, a concern that it is the same people doing everything, and that, if our churches are to survive, and thrive, we need to recruit new people to carry on the excellent work already done by those who have given such devoted service over many years.

I am grateful to those who serve on the St Bernadette's church committee, but I am concerned that at present we don't have a committee for St Luke's. I think one of our priorities in the coming months will be to set up a Parish Working Group, with representatives from both St Bernadette's and St Luke's to help me to identify needs and plan events for both churches.

A new initiative has been the formation of a Parish Mission Group and I am grateful to Chris and Kate Maude for helping me to plan formation events for the parish. Our first initiative has been to organize a day on the Rosary, led by the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph. A weekly online scripture reflection has



also been introduced, other ideas for celebrating Advent are also being discussed. We are actively looking for more suggestions, and I would strongly encourage you to please email any ideas for the Misson Group to [info.woolhampton@gmail.com](mailto:info.woolhampton@gmail.com) or to me.

To conclude, I would like to ask for three things that I believe will help us to grow as a community of faith and love.

First, I would like to invite you to do your best to arrive early for Mass. I realise it can be difficult (especially for young families), but this will give you an opportunity to prepare your hearts and minds for the celebration of the Mass – the source and summit of our Christian life.

Secondly, I would like you to think about how you might become more involved in the life of our parish. We have many opportunities for to serve your community: perhaps as a reader, a welcomer, a flower arranger – or just helping to wash up after coffee. By getting involved, you will not only get to know your fellow parishioners better, but also experience a to chance grow in your faith – and an opportunity to encourage others to do the same.

And one final request: It is a blessing and (mostly!) a joy being your parish priest... but please do remember that I am also a monk at the Abbey – and I have commitments and responsibilities there too. So I ask for your patience in remembering that I may not always be able to respond to requests as generously as I would like.

Many thanks for your support and encouragement!

*Fr Alban Hood, OSB*

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