



PARISH OF WOOLHAMPTON

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

www.douaiparish.org.uk

Douai Abbey and St Mary's, RG7 5TQ

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

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26 JANUARY 2025

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME– YEAR C

Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10	<i>Ezra read from the law of God and the people understood what was read.</i>
Psalms 118:1-4	<i>Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life.</i>
1 Corinthians 12:12-30	<i>You together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it.</i>
Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21	<i>This text is being fulfilled today.</i>

THIS WEEK

Saturday 25 January	St Luke's	5.30pm
Sunday 26 January	St Bernadette's <i>(Mass Intention: People of the Parish)</i>	9.45am
	Abbey Church	10.30am
Mon 27 Jan – Sat 1 Feb	Abbey Church	7.45am

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 (Confessions)

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 · Bill Bateman · Patricia Brennismeyer · Pat Campbell · Luke Conlon · Mary Cox · Theodora Fernandez · Kevin McCormack · Marigold Norman · Babs O'Sullivan · Barbara Stocker · Also Don Hood, Fr Alban's father.

Please pray for those who have died recently and keep their loved ones in prayer.

MESSAGE FROM FR ALBAN

Dear Parishioners,

This Sunday, we keep the Sunday of the Word of God. Pope Francis has chosen as the theme the words of the Psalmist, "I hope in your Word" (Psalm 119). It is a cry of hope in God.

We are encouraged again to look to the scriptures for inspiration and life. We might turn to the Gospel of St Luke, from which our Sunday gospel passages are currently taken. There is a welter of materials available on The God Who Speaks website www.godwhospeaks.uk.

One way of reading and praying the scriptures is *Lectio Divina*, a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer. One of the most helpful definitions of this practice I've seen is that given by the late Abbot Stephen Ortiger of Worth Abbey:

Though it is a monastic practice, lectio is particularly suited to busy people who do not live in monasteries but want to raise their minds and hearts to God.... In lectio, we do not so much read the text as allow the text to read us, for the text is both a mirror in which I see myself and a window through which I gaze on God.

Our second reading today from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians urges us to remember that "all the members of the body [of Christ] are one body..." we as a parish community are made up of separate, distinct people. Without the diverse relationships within the group, a would-be community could never get off the ground. In a true community, all members are unique, valued, and accepted 'as is'.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all communities really were places of harmony, peace, full of people who recognised that there can be unity in diversity?

And yet we know that too often, the very opposite happens, when we experience antipathies, when we become hostile to one another – when the presence of those we find difficult seems menacing and brings out in us aggression and bad feelings. Such blocks are natural, but if unchecked, they can become destructive. If we allow ourselves to be guided by our emotional reactions, cliques will very quickly start to form within the community. It will become no longer a community, but a collection of people shut in on themselves and shut off from others.

There are several manifestations of antipathies in community life. One operates at the basic level of irritation – why does so and so sitting behind me in church insist on singing so loudly? Why does my work colleague always insist on slurping their coffee? These may sound petty but are none the less sources of frustration. Suspicion of others' motives is another manifestation: 'She never speaks to me – she's obviously got it in for me' and there's the tendency to label individuals, the harmful belief that people can't change. These tendencies deny the subjects the space they need to change. Before I can see change in another person, my inflexible view of them needs to change. I can't change another person; I can only change myself.

Community relationships are only authentic and stable when they are founded on the acceptance of weakness, on forgiveness and on the hope of growth. Even a cursory glance at St. Benedict's rule reveals the centrality of this in community life. Even his decree that Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer must always end with the reciting of the Lord's Prayer makes it clear that he is insisting on the need for us to make a pledge to one another that we forgive as we have been forgiven.

I love what the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke has to say about human relationships when he says he holds it 'to be the highest task that each should stand guard over the solitude of the other.' That conveys a sense of respect, of allowing another their space. I find another helpful image of authentic relationship to be Albrecht Dürer's picture of the praying hands, where the hands come together in an outward gesture. I find this helpful both because it makes clear that a mature relationship requires a deep and profound respect for the free and empty space within and between each other and because it implies that true community is a participation in a greater reality beyond itself.

To know ourselves as members of the body of Christ is to discover and use our gifts fully, Today's Gospel challenges us to believe that the same spirit that anointed Jesus in the synagogue is also upon us, and that we too, each in our own way, are to bring the Good News to those with whom we live and work.

With prayers and best wishes,

Yours devotedly,

Father Alban OSB

SECOND COLLECTION THIS WEEKEND

A message from Rev. Canon James McAuley: “Since I became Dean of our Cathedral Church in 2022, the parish has had to pay for the emergency repair of three serious roof leaks. Our quinquennial architectural survey has indicated work required to the roof, windows, heating, and electrical systems costing over £2 million.

I appeal to you to support the Second Collection for the Cathedral on **26 January**. Never has this annual collection by parishes for the Mother Church of the Diocese been more critical or needed. Your support is vitally important to us. Thank you”.

2025: PILGRIMS OF HOPE

The Holy Father has proclaimed 2025 as a Jubilee Year, a sacred time of renewal, reflection, and grace celebrated every 25 years. With the theme “Pilgrims of Hope,” this Jubilee invites all Catholics to embark on a journey of faith and transformation. Read more [here](#).

CAFOD VOLUNTEER NEEDED

We are looking for a parishioner who could help promote CAFOD at St Luke’s Church. Please contact Jo for more information jolewry@cafod.org.uk or call 07710 094447.

A LIFELINE FOR TROUBLED MARRIAGES

If your marriage is in difficulty, please reach out to Retrouvaille, a Catholic ministry. Even if you’re considering separation, divorce, or are already separated – Retrouvaille could be the solution you’re looking for. No group therapy or group work. More information about Retrouvaille [here](#) or call 07887 296 983. Next programme starts **27 February** via Zoom.

HOPE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The groundbreaking, intimate and inspiring autobiography from Pope Francis is now available in hardback. HOPE includes a wealth of revelations, anecdotes and illuminating thoughts. It is a very human memoir, moving and sometimes funny, which represents the ‘story of a life’ and, at the same time, a touching moral and spiritual testament and will be Pope Francis’s legacy of hope for future generations.

FESTIVAL: A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED

Taking place in Winchester Cathedral, 28 February - 2 March, a literary festival with a theological slant to celebrate the very best new fiction and non-fiction with a faith perspective. Hear from inspiring speakers, including Malcom Guite, Chine Mcdonald and Francis Spufford, and explore the Cathedral on a literary tour. More information can be found [here](#).