



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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30 MARCH 2025

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT 'LAETARE' – YEAR C

Joshua 5:9-12

The people of God entered the promised land and there kept the Passover.

Psalm 33 Response

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

'God through Christ reconciled us to himself.'

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

'Your brother was dead, and is alive.'

THIS WEEK

Saturday 29 March

St Luke's

5.30pm

(Mass Intention: Private Thanksgiving)

Sunday 30 March

St Bernadette's

9.45 am

(Mass Intention: People of the Parish)

Abbey Church

10.30 am

Mon 31 Mar- Sat 5 Apr

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 (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 · Eileen Harvey · Kevin McCormack · Marigold Norman · Babs O'Sullivan
Barbara Stocker · Also Don Hood, Fr Alban's father.

Please pray for those who have died recently, especially Mary Cox, and keep their loved ones in prayer. Mary's funeral takes place in St Mary's Church at 12pm on Wednesday 2 April.

MESSAGE FROM FR ALBAN

Dear Parishioners,

It may seem strange on Mothering Sunday to have a Gospel not about Mothers and Sons, but Fathers and Sons, but the famous parable of the Prodigal Son is highly appropriate because there is something in this story for everyone, whether we are a mother or a father, a son or a daughter.

It underlines the importance of good parenting, of giving a child a good grounding in moral values in a suitably protected environment but also, when the appropriate time comes, about giving the child the necessary freedom to make their own life choices. And, of course, it is about being there for them, always ready to welcome them back into the family when things go wrong.

The story is about good parenting, but it is also about being a good child, about being able to learn from our mistakes. The important thing that this young man learnt was that there is no shame in returning home. He had the courage to make that decision and not to cut himself off from his family even more.

There are three main characters in today's gospel – the father, the prodigal son and the elder son. Which character are we? Parts of each of the three characters in each of us. There is the part of the father in us who is caring – a keen eye for the lost and a nose for when a party is needed. There is a younger son in us which wants to grab everything we can and try everything we shouldn't. And then there's the part of the older brother who is jealous when we think others are getting a better deal than we are. All three characters are within us, competing to shape our lives and behaviour.

Our story is, however, not about us – it's about God. It is a parable of the limitless love God has for us whether we identify with the prodigal son or the selfish older brother. God is the very best of parents; he is constantly there for us. And he is there waiting to welcome us into his arms whenever we are ready to return to him.

To my mind the most beautiful line in the story is the one that says: While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran and kissed him.

This describes perfectly the relationship God has with us. Even when we are far off he runs to meet and welcome us. His heart is moved with pity for the condition we have allowed ourselves to get into. He waits with longing for us to return and to experience his forgiveness.

One day a teacher told his pupils the story of the Prodigal Son and at the end asked them a question. 'Who in the story was sorry when the Prodigal Son returned home?' 'A little girl who had been listening sympathetically to the story. She waved her hand in the air. "I know!" she said beamingly. "It was the fatted calf."

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours devotedly,

Father Alban OSB

SECOND COLLECTION

There will be a Second Collection at **this weekend's** Masses in aid of the Clergy Assistance Fund. Your contribution helps to look after the welfare, ongoing formation and personal support of our clergy, from the early days of ordination all the way into retirement. Thank you for your support.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Stations of the Cross will be prayed at **6.30pm on Friday** at St Luke's Church and at 12pm on **11 April** at St Bernadette's Church, followed by a Lent lunch.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Please note there will be Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Confessions can be heard following Mass next Sunday, **6 April**, at St Bernadette's Church.

The Pastoral Area Reconciliation Service takes place at 7.30pm on Wednesday **9 April** at St Joseph's Church, Newbury. Individual Confessions will be available.

CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES – LENT CHALLENGE

Our Confirmation candidates continue with their Lenten challenge, taking part in The Big Lent Walk for CAFOD. Every £1 they raise will help fight poverty globally, so please encourage our young people by sponsoring them. You can do so [here](#).

SAVE THE DATE

There is an impressive lineup coming together for the Parish Music Evening on Saturday **7 June**, so keep the date free in your diary, you won't want to miss it!

NEW WEEKLY OFFERTORY ENVELOPES

The new weekly envelopes for offertory donations and Friday self-denial are available at the back of our churches. These envelopes are to be used from the weekend of **5/6 April** onwards. Your current boxes run until May this year, but please discard these, and use the new envelopes from April. Thank you for your continued generosity.

SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARIES MASS

Are you celebrating a 25th, 30th, 40th, 50th, 60th or anniversary over 60 years? If so, Bishop Philip would like to invite you to a Mass of celebration. This will take place at St Bede's church in Basingstoke on Saturday **21 June** at 11am. This will be followed by a buffet lunch. It is a wonderful occasion to celebrate and witness to Marriage.

Please send an email to anniversaries@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk to request a form for you to complete and return.

THE PASSION PLAY COMES TO READING

RISE Theatre will be performing the Passion Play in Forbury Gardens, Reading RG1 3BB, on **Good Friday** (18 April) at 3.30pm and **Holy Saturday** (19 April) at 3pm. The one-hour production depicts the key moments of Christ's Passion and other Gospel moments.

This outdoors event is free and open to all. Don't forget to take a blanket or outdoor chair if you prefer not to stand. See the poster at the back of our churches.

CAN YOU HELP WITH THE COLLECTION COUNT?

Could you volunteer to help with counting the collection? It's a flexible commitment, a couple of hours at Douai every six weeks or so. If you're interested in joining the team, please contact the [Parish Office](#). A big thank you to those already volunteering, your help is really appreciated.