



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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13 APRIL 2025

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD – YEAR C

THIS WEEK

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY

5:30pm	Vigil Mass (Saturday 12 April) <i>(Special Mass Intention: Private)</i>	St Luke's
9:45am	Mass <i>(Mass Intention: People of the Parish)</i>	St Bernadette's
10:30am	Mass	Abbey Church

MONDAY 14 – SPY WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL

7:45am	Mass	Abbey Church
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17 APRIL MAUNDY THURSDAY

8:00pm	Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper <i>followed by Watching until 11:45pm</i>	Abbey Church
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18 APRIL GOOD FRIDAY *(day of fast and abstinence)*

10:00am	Children's Way of The Cross	St Bernadette's
12:00pm	Stations of The Cross	St Bernadette's
3:00pm	Celebration of The Lord's Passion	Abbey Church

19 APRIL HOLY SATURDAY

9.00pm	The Easter Vigil	Abbey Church
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All are welcome to daily services in Douai Abbey Church:

6.20am Morning Office (Matins & Lauds)

12.45pm Midday Prayer

6.00pm Vespers

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

Tuesday 15 April: Pastoral Area Penitential Service St Joseph's Church, Newbury, at 7.30pm, with several priests present.

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 Christina Hill-Williams, and keep their loved ones in prayer.

MESSAGE FROM FR ALBAN

Dear Parishioners,

The ecstatic crowd that welcomes Jesus with the adulation we normally reserve for pop stars, will - within a few days - turn on him and howl for his death. The same crowd will express both adoration and detestation. As Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, it seems to the people the words of the Prophet Zechariah are being fulfilled before their eyes: Behold your King riding on a donkey - and they turn out in numbers to give him a royal escort. Yet the same hands waving palm branches, the biblical equivalent of football scarves, will by the end of this week become clenched fists of anger and reprisal. The same people who today look to the future thrilled at the possibilities Jesus represents, will – within a few days, fed by rumour, anxiety, and bigotry - express a narrow self-righteousness ruled by suspicion, exclusion, self-preservation. We love this man! – except when it might cost us something to do so. Then we hate him.

How we react to the stranger, to the neighbour, depends a great deal upon our own sense of security, what we feel is at stake. We don't mind someone coming into our country, our community, our supermarket - and exercising their rights, claiming their needs, so long as it doesn't ask too much of me, doesn't undermine my rights and needs. So long as I am not asked to change too much. And fair enough.

It's not a different crowd today and on Good Friday. It's the same people. Within a few days this crowd is persuaded that Jesus' mission and message represents a threat to their way of life, risks inflaming the political tinderbox that is colonial Jerusalem, demands too much of them personally. Today they welcome Jesus into their lives. They cheer his entry into Jerusalem, but the shadow of the Cross falls across his triumphal path. There is another side to the cheering mob; and we shall see it within a few days.

The theatre of Palm Sunday and the days that follow reveals dramatically the tragic nature of our human condition, our fragmented nature, our broken morality. Times of crisis such as the pandemic throw into the spotlight our tendency to live with contradiction, to compartmentalise our outlook, to make exceptions to our love. But what of normal times, when choices are less dramatic, the cost to us (at least) less demanding. How much do we compartmentalise - our tastes, choices, morality? How readily do we construct mental reservations (and the word bears a double meaning) when we reach certain issues off-limits to our more expansive values? Even at the best of times, what prevents me from opening my heart to the stranger? Is it well-grounded concerns about security and resources - or is it the fear of having to see things in a new way?

It is an irony that Jesus is the one about whom the crowd makes an exception, a reservation. For he is the one person who does not compartmentalise, who does not fence off areas of his moral life, who does not hold different and contradictory attitudes at the same time. Throughout his life, and his passion, Jesus shows us wholeness, integrity - which is another way of saying holiness and salvation. He demonstrates, as he said of Bartholemew, how to be without guile. It is sin which fragments us, cordoning off areas of our lives, blinding us to inconsistency, allowing fear and insecurity to set up their insidious cattle-pens in our imagination.

What does it take for me to open that reservation, where I keep my darkest thoughts? What does it take for me to be whole, to be a person in whom there is no guile? This week, this Holy Week we have just begun, poses that question to each of us in the deepest way possible. Today, at the gates of Jerusalem, I meet a stranger, who will walk into my life and become the centre of a drama which will threaten to change me to the core of my being. What will I do? Will I allow this stranger to open up my life and bring me wholeness and healing? Will I allow him to challenge those closed-off areas of my life, those secret places at odds with what I know or believe is the real me? Will I let him do that? Or will I crucify him?

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours devotedly,

Father Alban OSB

ABBEY FLOWERS FOR EASTER – SPECIAL COLLECTION

This Sunday there will be a retiring collection at the 10.30am Mass towards flowers for the Abbey Church at Easter. You can give via the donations terminal near the church door, using the ‘Monastery’ option. All donations that day via the terminal and marked ‘Monastery’ will go towards flowers. Thank you!

INVITATION TO THE CHRISM MASS

Bishop Philip invites you to celebrate with him the Mass of Chrism at 11am on Tuesday **15 April** at St John’s Cathedral, Portsmouth. At this Solemn Mass the Bishop will bless the oils to be used in the sacraments in the parishes through the year ahead, while the priests renew the promises made at ordination.

GOOD FRIDAY COLLECTION

The collection on Good Friday supports the work of the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land who have the unique responsibility to care for the Holy Places as well for the ‘Living Stones’, the Christians living there. In these challenging times in the Middle East, Christians are experiencing unique hardships, and we have an opportunity to help them through this pontifical collection.

ASSISTED SUICIDE BILL

Ahead of the Bill’s Third Reading and vote, likely on or around Friday 25 April, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, on behalf of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, has released a Pastoral Message on Assisted Suicide, urging Catholics to contact their MPs – even if they have done so already – to oppose the Bill that seeks to legalise assisted suicide. You can read it [here](#).

Right to Life UK has a simple [online link](#) to submit your message to your MP asking to stop assisted suicide being rushed into law. Or pick up a red and black postcard produced by [Not Dead Yet](#) from the back of church and send it to your MP, asking them to vote against the Bill.

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. This outdoors event is free. Don’t forget to take a blanket or outdoor chair.

PARISH MUSIC EVENING

Performances from singers and musicians from the parish, along with special guest appearances. Takes place on Saturday **7 June** at 7.15pm, St Bernadette’s Church, to raise funds for the parish charity, Rainbow Trust. Tickets £20. Priority booking for parish members until **20 April**. Sign up on forms in our churches or contact Graham on 07787 376 336 or email g_mhodge@hotmail.com.