



# 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*

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## 23 MARCH 2025

### THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR C

Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

*“I Am” has sent me to you.*

Psalms 102 Response

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious.*

1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12

*The way of life of the people with Moses in the desert was written down for our instruction.*

Luke 13:1-9

*‘Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.’*

### THIS WEEK

**Saturday 22 March**

**St Luke's**

**5.30pm**

*(Mass Intention: People of the Parish)*

**Sunday 23 March**

**St Bernadette's**

**9.45 am**

*(Mass Intention: Eileen & John Harvey)*

**Abbey Church**

**10.30 am**

**Mon 24 – Sat 29 Mar**

**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 Brenninkmeyer · 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.**

## **MESSAGE FROM FR ALBAN**

Dear Parishioners,

Today's gospel contains two messages for us: one is very grim, the other very comforting. In the first, Jesus calls us to repent of our sins and the fact that we do not know the hour of our death gives a sense of urgency about the timing of our repentance. In the second message, Jesus emphasises that God is merciful and will wait patiently for us to turn back to him.

Twice Jesus emphasises the urgent need for us to repent but then tells the story of the patient vinedresser who persuades the owner of the vineyard to wait another year for any signs of the fig tree bearing fruit.

Which message appeals to us? Most likely because of human nature we find the message about God's patient mercy more endearing. It gives us comfort, it makes us feel good, it tells us that we have a second chance – and this passage is sometimes described as the gospel of the second chance.

But how seriously do we take the other message, the call to repent? How often do we take time to reflect prayerfully on our lives and admit our need for God's forgiveness and healing? Or do we tend to put off doing so?

Some would say that in previous generations priests talked too much about sin and not enough about God's mercy. According to such a view too much emphasis on sin encouraged people to wallow in guilt rather than become aware of God's love and mercy in their lives.

There have been changes in the wake of Vatican II when 'Confession' has become described not as 'the sacrament of penance' but the 'sacrament of reconciliation.' In many churches dark, anonymous confessional boxes were replaced by more user-friendly reconciliation rooms, with the option of celebrating the sacrament face to face with the priest, in a more relaxed way, as well as providing a screen for those who prefer to preserve their anonymity.

Yet despite this rather more positive approach, the practice of the sacrament has almost died out in many places. Some would say that the pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other. One person has told me that for the first thirty years she heard nothing but sin and hellfire from the pulpit, but now these subjects are rarely mentioned. Has the church been soft-peddling on sin and encouraging us to become complacent about our need for repentance?

Today's Gospel challenges us to reflect on our own approach to the sacrament of reconciliation. Do we avail ourselves of it regularly, and if not why? Do we always intend to go but keep putting it off? What holds us back?

Fear? Embarrassment? Shame? Not knowing or forgetting how to go about it and being too ashamed to ask for help with the format? Bad memories of our experience of Confession? Fearing the sins we commit are too terrible to speak about? Fearing that it has been too long since our last confession? Fear that when we mention how long its been we might give the priest a heart attack? Or a belief that the whole thing is unnecessary?

Lent is a time when we are encouraged to reflect on the quality of our lives. Repentance is an important element in that process: It is good therefore to give priority to the Sacrament of Reconciliation during this season. Through reflection and repentance, we allow ourselves to be nourished so that we may grow, develop and most importantly, bear fruit.

There is no better time than Lent to return to the celebration the Sacrament of Reconciliation, to allow God to fertilise us, to dig the hard ground around our hearts so that he can bring us to new life, to re-birth, to new purpose and new vigour in our faith. "Reform your lives!" is the invitation given to us today: Surely that is an invitation that none of us can afford to refuse.

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours devotedly,

*Father Alban OSB*

## **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 **28 March** at St Bernadette's Church, followed by a Lent lunch.

## **'CARE NOT KILLING' PETITION**

Please consider signing the Care Not Killing [petition](#) which calls on MPs to vote against legalising assisted suicide in England and Wales. The Terminally Ill Adults Bill would make vulnerable people, including the elderly and disabled, feel a burden on family or carers, resulting in pressure to end their lives. More information [here](#).

## **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.

## **SUPPORT OUR RUNNERS ... AND OUR WALKERS!**

We have three runners taking part in the Reading Half Marathon today, Sunday **23 March**, raising money for our parish charity, Rainbow Trust. Good luck to Damian Deeney, Dominic Servais and Andrew Webber. There's still time to sponsor Damian via his online [Just Giving](#) page.

The parish's Confirmation Group is taking part in The Big Lent Walk for CAFOD, so please encourage our young people by sponsoring them. You can do so [here](#).

## **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.

## **PASTORAL AREA LENT RETREAT**

Join with fellow parishioners from across our pastoral area for a Lenten Retreat led by Fr Francis Preston, SDB (includes a programme for young parishioners). Please bring a packed lunch. Takes place 11am-3pm next Saturday, **29 March**, at Our Lady of Lourdes, Hungerford, RG17 0AG. All are very welcome.

## **CAFOD THANKS**

Thanks to your kind support, we raised £48 for the CAFOD Family Fast Day appeal through our jam sale this past weekend. If you have any spare label-free jars at home, please consider donating them so we can prepare for our next event.