



Sacred Heart Church, Berkhamsted



✠ Fourth Sunday of Advent/Christmas, Year B, 24th December 2023 – Psalter Week 4

'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.'

There are many lessons to be learnt from the readings at Masses since we began this season of Advent. One of them is that to be happy in this and in the life after, or better still, to be blessed in the true sense of the word, we need to cooperate with God in his plan.

Perhaps you would remember that cry of desperation echoed in the first reading of the First Sunday of Advent – *"Oh that you would tear the heavens open and come down! At your Presence the mountains would melt..."* as the people of God came to the recognition that it was their deviation from the laws and ways of God that brought misery upon them. (Isa. 63:16-17, 64:1, 3-8)

The call to cooperate with God requires a total surrender and trust on our part. Besides the grace of God, we are only able to surrender ourselves if we believe that God's plan for us is for welfare and not for evil, and to give us a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11) Mary is blessed because she not only trusted, (Magnificat, Luke 1:45ff) she also cooperated with God in his plan to redeem humanity from the consequences of its sins.

Another key role model for us on how to surrender and cooperate with God is Joseph, who hardly spoke but was outstanding in his actions. In Matthew's account of how Jesus came to be born, the Evangelist describing his total surrender writes: *"When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home."* (Matthew 1:24) Imagine what could have happened to the Child-Saviour in the womb of his betrothed; conceived by the power of the Most High God

Mary and Joseph surely understood that it is by aligning ourselves with God's plan that we live a fruitful and blessed life. More so, because they surrendered to and cooperated with God, even non-Christians today celebrate in some ways, in this season of joy. In what ways therefore, might God be asking you to cooperate with him so that the people around you can experience something of God's plan of welfare and a future filled with joy, peace and love in their lives? Can you work with God to be his vehicle of relief to those having difficulties in life; protection in your family and to the vulnerable; and more importantly, to bring his Gift of Jesus Christ into the lives of others?

Wishing you and your families a holy and merry Christmas. Fr Joseph

Mass Intentions:

Sun 24 Dec	✠ 4 th Sunday of Advent	8:30am	People of the Parish
		10:00am*	Kathleen and Norman Suckley RIP
	Christmas Eve Mass	4:30pm	Christmas Carols
		5:00pm	People of the Parish
Mon 25 Dec	✠ The Nativity of the Lord	8:30am	People of the Parish
		10:00am*	People of the Parish
Tue 26 Dec	St Stephen, The First Martyr	10:00am	Patricia and Edward Caddle RIP Ann
Thu 28 Dec	The Holy Innocents, Martyrs	12:00pm	John Mularkey Int
Fri 29 Dec	St Thomas Becket, Bishop & Martyr	10:00am	Mary McEnaney RIP (Birthday)
Sat 30 Dec	6 th day in the Octave of Christmas	10:00am	Ann and Thomas Jackson Int (Good Health)
	Sunday Vigil	5:00pm	David Holden and All Holy Souls RIP
Sun 31 Dec	✠ The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph	8:30am	People of the Parish
		10:00am*	Douglas Johnstone and All Holy Souls RIP

* Livestream Mass

Saturday - 9:00am – Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (and confession alongside) with Benediction at 9:45am

Confessions can also be arranged outside of these times, please contact Fr Joseph

We Pray for:

The Sick and the Housebound

We pray especially for: Lin Thomas, Edith Dicom, Caroline Butler, Ann McDonnell, Tom Jackson, Tess Hennessy, Anthony Doolan, William Campbell, Alice Danladi, Fr John Boland, Canon Jane Bannister, Ron Harper, Tom Kemplen, Joe Quinn, Rosemary Goacher, Jane Blayney, Dympna O'Connor, Peter Doran, Baby Lily Angel Sweetman, Gerry Earls.

We commend them to God's healing.

The Recently Deceased & Anniversaries

We pray for those who have died recently or those whose anniversaries occur at this time including: Michael Earls, Fr Terence Murray, Peter Doran, Baby Lily Angel Brinklow, Arthur Murray, Peter Ariokiasamy, Peter Hammond, Fr Timothy O'Connor, Tom O'Reilly, Bernard Gray.

Eternal rest granted onto them oh Lord and let the perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.

The Blessed Sacrament Lamp

is sponsored this week for expectant mothers and unborn children.

Sacred Heart Church
Park Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 1HX
Tel: 01442 863 845

Email: berkhamsted@rcdow.org.uk

Website: <https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/berkhamsted/>

(Office Hours: 10:00am-2.00pm, Mon, Tue and Thurs.)

Parish Priest - Fr Joseph Okoro: josephokoro@rcdow.org.uk

Administrator – Laura Etson: berkhamsted@rcdow.org.uk

Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs)

Carmella Perkins – Sacred Heart PSR:

berkhamstedsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

Happy Christmas – Fr Joseph and Laura would like to wish all Parishioners a very happy Christmas.
The office will be closed from 22nd December and will re-open on the 2nd January. If anything is urgent, please contact Fr Joseph.

Christmas Mass and Parking – We are joyfully looking forward to welcoming families, friends and all our parishioners to the parish as we gather on Sunday eve to celebrate the birth of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. A gentle appeal to all who can, to walk to the church for the Christmas Vigil Mass on Sunday 24th December, to help us manage the volume of traffic we usually have in the church car park at this time. Thank you for your understanding with this.

Thank You May I take this opportunity to recognise and thank everyone for their generous service in the parish and for the preparations that went into organising the senior citizens' Christmas lunch, the carol service and the Christmas Masses. Thank you to Laura, our parish administrator, Josie, who ensures that everywhere is neat and tidy, our parish finance committee, the flower arrangers and those who set up the Christmas trees and crib, the Marian shrine grounds caretakers, the sacristan, the altar linen launderer, the choir, readers, extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the catechists, altar servers, those who look after and prepare our young parishioners for the liturgy, the counters, the Sunday teas and coffees band, and the social team. Whatever you do in the parish, you do to the glory of God and for the growth of his Kingdom, here in Sacred Heart Parish. May God bless and keep you. Fr Joseph.

Christmas Gift Envelopes – Please take one from the back of the Church to place your Christmas gift inside. This is an opportunity to appreciate the work of the Priest in the Parish. You can also use the contactless machine to make your Christmas gift donation and can gift-aid your donation if you are a UK taxpayer. THANK YOU.

St Joseph's Statue – St Joseph has finally pitched his tent here in our Parish, courtesy of a friend of mine elsewhere, and who prefers to remain anonymous. Please remember to pray for the donor whenever you go to St Joseph to ask for his intercession.

To you, O Blessed Joseph, we have recourse in our affliction, and having implored the help of your most holy spouse, we now, with hearts filled with confidence, earnestly beg you to take us under your protection.

Through that sacred bond of charity which united you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and by that fatherly love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you to look graciously upon the beloved inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased by his blood, and to aid us in our necessities with your power and strength.

Defend, O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, the chosen children of Jesus Christ. Keep from us, O most loving father, all blight of error and corruption. Aid us from on high, most valiant defender, in this conflict with the powers of darkness. And just as you once saved the Child Jesus from mortal danger, so now defend God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity. Shield us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and strengthened by your help, we may be able to live a virtuous life, die a happy death, and obtain everlasting bliss in heaven. Amen.

Requiem Mass – for the late Michael Earls will be held at Sacred Heart on Tuesday 9th January at 1:45pm. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. May he rest in peace.

Offertory Collections – 17/12/23

Weekly Loose Plate - £247.61

Weekly Contactless - £0.00

Thank you to every one of you for your generosity to our Parish.

Contactless Donation Machine – We are grateful for your continuing support to the parish. Donations for Mass stipends, votive candles, building maintenance fund, flowers for the Church and offertory can also be made using the contactless machine. You can also gift-aid your donation if you are a UK taxpayer. THANK YOU

Online Giving – Should you wish to become a regular online donor please use the Parish bank details below.

WRCDT Berkhamsted

Sort Code 40-05-20

Ac. Number 31264354

Please do include your name as your reference and if you would like to gift-aid please ask Fr Joseph or Laura for a form. Thank you for your continued generosity and support to our parish. It is greatly appreciated.

Mass Intentions – Please call or visit the parish office to book Masses for your intentions, email Laura or use the blue envelopes at the back of the church.

The Diocesan suggested donation is £10.00. Thank you.

If making a donation online, please use 'MASS STIPEND' and the date of the mass as your reference.

Parishes Celebrations / Dates for your Diaries –

24th Dec Christmas Eve Mass – 5:00pm

25th Dec Christmas Day Mass – 8:30am & 10:00am

14th Jan Sunday Lunch 12:00pm

14th Jan First Holy Programme Session – Gathering 9:00am

Blessed Sacrament Lamp - If you would like to sponsor the Blessed Sacrament Lamp, for a week, the diary is open. To sponsor costs just £5 for a whole week. Just let the office know your preferred week and your intention.

Tea and coffee - after Sunday 10am Mass. All are invited to join us in the parish hall for teas, coffees and chats.

Hall door entry code – If you regularly use the Parish hall please contact the office for the latest door entry code.

Second Collection – There will be a second collection on both the 30th & 31st December in support of those suffering from the conflict in the Holy Land. Thank you for your generosity.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR AT SACRED HEART

Sunday 24th Dec – Christmas Eve

Sunday Mass of Advent – 8:30am, 10:00am

Christmas Eve Mass – 5:00pm

Children are welcomed to come dressed as Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds or as any other image found within the crib.

Monday 25th Dec - CHRISTMAS DAY

Mass of the Nativity of the Lord - 8.30am & 10.00am

Masses during the Octave of CHRISTMAS

Tuesday 26th 10:00am – St Stephen, The First Martyr.

Thursday 28th 12:00pm – The Holy Innocents, Martyrs.

Friday 29th 10:00am – St Thomas Becket, Bishop & Martyr.

Saturday 30th 10:00am, Vigil Mass 5pm – 6th Day in the Octave of Christmas.

Sunday 31st 8:30am & 10:00am - ✠ The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph.

Monday 1st Jan 10:00am - ✠ Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.