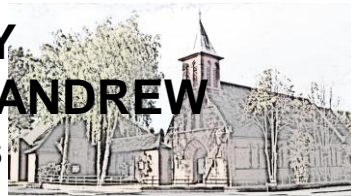


CHURCH OF OUR LADY IMMACULATE AND ST ANDREW

16 Nightingale Road, HITCHIN, SG5 1QS

(In the care of the Augustinians of the Assumption)



Newsletter No 1925

Daily Mass at 10am is open to the public and is livestreamed on [Livestream Mass](#) and posted to the homepage of the parish website by 11.30am daily. If you can come another day please leave Sunday for those who can't.

9th – 16th January 2021 – THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD Year B the gospel according to Mark

Parish Prayer: Lord Jesus, as the world copes with coronavirus, help us to remember that you are always with us. Grant wisdom to decision makers and bless all health workers. Bring healing to the sick; give peace to the anxious and comfort those who are sad. Stir us to show your love and mercy most especially to the poor and weak. This we ask in your name. Amen.

Readings: This week: Is 55:1-11, 1 John 5:1-9, Mark 1:7-11

Psalm: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Next week: Sam 3:3-10.19, Cor 6:13-15.17-20, John 1:35-42

Ramblings

The words of God to Jesus at his baptism by John the Baptist are the words God says to us at our baptism, 'You are my child, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.' John tells us that it is not difficult to live by God's commandments. Why? Because we are made in the image of God. The commandments of God – love God and love neighbour - are written into our DNA. When we are born, we do not have to learn to breathe, apart, maybe, from the start-up slap!! Nor do we have to learn to eat. We wake up mum quite often when we are hungry in the early days!! In fact, we naturally love God and love neighbour early on, unless it is driven out of us or we are taught otherwise. We also become temples of the Spirit which John tells us is the Spirit of truth. This feast so close to Christmas shows us that we need the light of Jesus to shine upon us and within us so that we see better how the Spirit is working in our lives and in the lives of others; and how the truth is shaping and moulding our lives to become more like that of Christ. In the light of Christmas and in the knowledge that God's favour rests on us, today is a day to reflect and ponder on the wonder of God's presence. Conscious of the power and presence of this wonder will help light the way through the darkness and challenges of the lockdown and, with this light, we will be a light of hope for others. "He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world. You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great light, bathed in the glory of Him who is the light of heaven." (St Gregory of Nazianzen)



Diary Dates

Sun 10 January – Sat 16 January
10am Mass in the church.
Wed 13 January
6pm – Feed Up Warm Up – Scout Hall

Message from Bishop John Sherrington, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster 8th January 2021

The current position and role of our churches in this phase of the pandemic

We are aware that questions are being asked as to why churches remain open during this National Lockdown. We are also aware that many local authorities are calling for places of worship to close. We wish to respond to these concerns.

Churches are allowed to open for prayer and communal worship at this time according to the provision of the most recent national legislation and Government guidance. This decision is based on two factors: the recognition that our churches are safe, and that the service they offer is essential.

The safety of our churches has been affirmed by Public Health England in its current advice to the Government. This is publicly recognised to be the result of the great efforts made by many people in the implementation of procedures mandated by PHE and thereby establishing the necessary conditions within churches for their safe use.

Our churches are making a significant contribution to the personal resilience and inner strength of people which is much needed at this time. Many are hubs from which essential support is offered especially to those most in need, extending well beyond the faith communities which use them. This includes the regular provision of food; the care of the homeless; and being a place of peace and reflection (which is safe) for many whose living conditions are very limited. This will become more appreciated as the programme of vaccination increases. The vital

link between prayer and action is important to maintain this service.

At this phase of the pandemic, which is causing alarm and fear, our churches will exercise their role with increased diligence to ensure continuing safety and service.

Our clergy will ensure that all are aware that there is no duty or responsibility to come to church and communicate to all there is no obligation to attend Mass on Sunday. They will review, in each local area, the provision offered by the church in order to ensure that the highest standards of safety are maintained. This will include a review of the role of stewards, the provision of additional social distancing within the church, a review of cleansing routines, and consideration of the personal circumstances of the priest(s) and people. On this basis there will be a local evaluation and decision about the possible reduction in the times of opening and the frequency of communal worship.

In conclusion we recognise the higher levels of fear and anxiety which the new strain of the virus has prompted and we have a very proper awareness of the care which must be exercised by everyone, under the guidance of PHE health professionals.

We recognise, too, that isolation is having a profound detrimental effect on people and that the role of churches in easing that isolation in ways which are safe and supportive has been recognised as a positive and beneficial contribution to the common good.

We pray for the dedicated work of the NHS and continue to provide spiritual support to staff and patients through the network of chaplains working both in the hospitals and the community.

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Fr Tom is very keen that our church should remain open for Mass as he sees it as beacon of light and a sign of hope in these difficult times.

We are monitoring numbers daily and will consider what is best for the safety of parishioners continuing in the future. As a result of the high number of infections locally we are finding that we are losing people who had been helping with cleaning and stewarding (due to home schooling and personal concerns for safety) – both of which are vital to be able to open the church safely. **If we do not have a steward on any day we can not open safely and we will not be able to have a public Mass.**

There will be a closed sign on the door. We are doing all we can to ensure this does not happen but just wanted to warn you.

Booking Sunday Mass We have retaped the church so that we have 2m between everyone at all times and this means our capacity is reduced to 16 household groups in pews and 12 single chairs. For Masses on Monday-Saturday there is not a problem with numbers attending and we should have no problems accommodating those who come.

Firstly can I please make a plea that **if you can please come on Monday-Saturday at 10am** and leave the Sunday Mass for those who have no alternative. There is no longer any obligation to attend Mass on Sunday.

For Sunday Masses as the numbers have still been quite high we will need to have a booking system.

Can you please book weekly by Thursday 12pm for the Sunday Mass. (bookings after that time may not be processed)

Book by emailing hitchin@rcdow.org.uk or ringing or texting **07801 752141** giving the following details:

- Name
- Email address
- Telephone number (this will be used for track and trace) but you will be asked to use the QR code and the NHS Test and Trace App on your phone
- Number of people in your household (priority will be given to families)

We will confirm you have a place. Please do not assume that you have til you have received confirmation.

You need to book each week. We are not offering any standing bookings.

If you turn up without booking we will try to accommodate you if we have unbooked space or if we are fully booked you will need to wait in the hall and by the time Mass starts if people have not turned up then you can fill those spaces otherwise you will be asked to leave.

Please note that this means you must arrive before Mass starts to secure your place.

Thank you for your help with this. We are sorry we have to go down the booking route but it is necessary to do now we have less capacity.

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Please support Our Lady Immaculate and St Andrew Church - Hitchin on **#easyfundraising** this year, you can raise FREE donations when you shop online with over 4,300 retailers. It's simple and only takes 2 minutes to sign up! Plus if you sign up today, we'll get a £5 bonus donation: [Easy Fundraising](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/)





Annual General Meeting of Helping Herts Homeless,
Sunday 24th January 2021 at 3pm over Zoom. You can join the meeting at the right time by

following the link below.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89361982930?pwd=VVoVc3pWbDkwalFNQ0dpVzAvWHBDdz09>

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New year's resolution: Make a difference with CAFOD as a



volunteer. CAFOD Westminster is looking for volunteers, who care about global poverty, to help us inspire others to act here, so we can tackle poverty and injustice across the developing world. Are you a people-person who would relish involving and encouraging others? Are you a good communicator who would enjoy speaking about our work in a Parish or School? Please get in touch with us on westminster@cafod.org.uk or 020 8449-6970 to find out more and book a place on one of our CAFOD online information sessions.

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Covid 19—a very challenging time for many marriages. So much uncertainty around, health, income, employment, vulnerable family members, children, housing.. Different ways of seeing things, coping with change, managing

fears can be a source of conflict and stress. It can be difficult to talk, to listen to support and comfort when there is so much uncertainty. Being together all the time, brings even more challenges. You just can't cope, would be better apart you wonder.

Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples, it brings a positive focus, new hope and helps nourish and grow your marriageand you don't need to leave home, it comes to you!

For confidential information about Retrouvaille, or to register for the next programme, a Virtual weekend commencing on **25th- 28th February 2021** Call or text 0788 7296983 or 0797 3380443.

Email: retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com – or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk





Union of spirits in truth, union of hearts in charity.' Fr Etienne Pernet founder of the Little Sisters of the Assumption , to work with the sick poor in their homes.

Faith Development Helpline

If you (or someone you know) needs to chat about your faith or have been feeling lost

Ring 07398821315

Tues/Wed/Thurs 8pm-10pm.
Confidential service provided.
No need to identify yourself





AMORIS LAETITIA THE JOY OF LOVE 212

Growing in Conjugal Love - Dialogue We ought to be able to acknowledge the other person's truth, the value of his or her deepest concerns, and what it is that they are trying to communicate, however aggressively.



If you have a need for prayer, please contact **Mary** on **07759195487** and let her know your prayer intentions

Parish Priest	Fr Tom O'Brien 07547 171570	Assistant Priest	Fr Euloge Kasine 07424 004647	Parish 01462 459126 E-mail: hitchin@rcdow.org.uk Website: https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/hitchin/
Parish Administrator	Cheryl Saunders	cherylsaunders@rcdow.org.uk }		
Pastoral Assistants	Robert Hitchcock	roberthitchcock@rcdow.org.uk }		
	Trish Bonnett	trishbonnett@rcdow.org.uk }		
	This week's counting teams: Sunday Team: Monday Team:			If you are going into hospital please notify the Chaplain on Tel: 01438 285519 or Email: spiritualcare.enh-tr@nhs.net