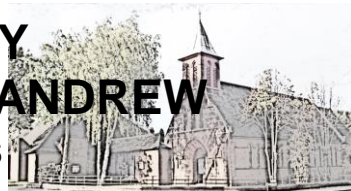




CHURCH OF OUR LADY IMMACULATE AND ST ANDREW

16 Nightingale Road, HITCHIN, SG5 1QS

(In the care of the Augustinians of the Assumption)



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.



Newsletter No 1941

1st May – 8th May 2021 – FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - Year B

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: : Acts 9:26-31, 1 John 3:18-24, John 15:1-8

Psalm: You, Lord, are my praise in the great assembly. Alleluia!

Next week: 10:25-26.34-35.44-48, 1 John 4:7-10, John 15:9-17

Ramblings I am the Vine, 2021

Richard Rohr said: *"Not everything can be cured or fixed, but it should be named properly."*

Whenever we are distressed, upset, angry or depressed it is often because of a failure to understand what is happening. Our thinking is confused and full of erroneous thoughts that tend to make our situation worse. People will pay therapists lots of money to help clarify their thinking, particularly about how they understand themselves. When we are ill, we go to the doctor to understand what is wrong with us. Once the diagnosis is correct, we can do something about it. One of the purposes of Jesus coming to live among us was to correct our thinking about God, about ourselves and the relationship between ourselves, God, each other and the planet. He didn't use books or formulate a new theological language; Jesus used the environment. He talked about sheep and shepherds, light and darkness, seeds and wheat, bread and wine, fire and wind and more. This week he uses the image of the vine and branches and fruit. God's fruit, that we produce, is to be shared just as Jesus shared everything he had with us, including his resurrection. Pruning is like jettisoning all that is unnecessary like excess weight, old habits no longer needed or that lead us astray. It is like cleaning the glass so that the light within – Christ – is able to shine more brightly. The vine helps us recognise that we are joined together helping each other bear fruit and that we are fed by the life of the same Spirit who inspired and guided Jesus. No wonder then that the wine that becomes Jesus Christ in the Eucharist makes us feel good and inspires our hearts to sing Alleluia!! After all, *we are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!*

Diary Dates

Sun 2 May – Sat 8 May	
10am Mass in the church.	
Mon 3 May Sts Philip and James	
Tue 4 May The English Martyrs	
Day of prayer for Victims and Survivors of abuse in the church and we join together in prayer at our Mass and at home.	
Wed 5 May	
6pm – Feed Up Warm Up – Scout Hall	

Mass attendance over the past week

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
28	65/24*	19	23	20	18	20

*livestream attendance

Please note that at the present time we are not full for the 10am Mass on Sunday so we will stop the need to book after this weekend. Please be aware that we will endeavor to ensure everyone gets a seat but you are advised to arrive in good time to ensure you do. The church is open from 9.30am. Hopefully when we get enough responses from our survey (see below) we will be offering more Masses at the weekend. Watch out for announcements in the newsletter, by email and on the parish website.

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Introducing additional Masses at the weekend

To date we have received 62 responses having sent it to nearly 700 addresses so we really would appreciate a more representative response than 9% return.

As lockdown is over and the future looks more positive with such a large number of people being vaccinated and the covid-19 figures going down, it is time for us to consider introducing more Masses at the weekends.

For each Mass we want to introduce we need the following roles filled:

- Stewards (greeting and noting details for track and trace and directing to seats)

- Readers (*currently only one reading and the Psalm and gospel acclamation required*)
- Eucharistic Ministers (*currently takes communion to parishioners in the pews*)
- Cleaners to fog the church after the Mass (*fogs church at the end of Mass, takes 10 minutes*)

We need volunteers for these roles to enable us to offer this Mass. We would hope to have enough volunteers so that there will be a rota and the commitment is not a weekly one for any individual. Training will be offered for those who have not undertaken these roles in the past.

We also have a chance to consider a change in times for the Sunday morning Masses as we have got used to having a Mass daily at 10am. We are considering three options for Sunday mornings:

- 8am and 10am (new times)
- 8.30am and 10.30am (old times)
- 10am and 12pm (new times)

We need your help with these decisions. We would be grateful for your opinions in this simple survey. Please click on the link below and complete the survey including your name and email address.

https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Mass_survey

If you are not on the internet you can collect a paper copy from the church. Also please see the reflection from our Bishops at the end of the newsletter about returning to Sunday Mass.

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Priest Training Fund – Thank you Thank you for your generosity to the Priest Training Fund collection last weekend. It is not too late to make a donation if you wish. Envelopes are available in the back of the church, or by contacting the parish office. Please continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood. For more information, or to make a donation, visit www.rcdow.org.uk/donations

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Next Sunday 9th May is the Day of Prayer for Eastern Christians when Eastern and Western Christians come together in communion through prayer.

During the Prayers of the Faithful today, we shall pray for Eastern Christians. If you wish to support them through the projects of the Eastern Catholic Churches, please donate by:

- 1 - giving online at www.facecharity.org/give
- 2 - texting DAYOFPRAYER to 70450 to donate £10 (*Texts cost £10 donation plus 1 standard rate message)
- 3 - writing a cheque made out to Fellowship and Aid to the Christians of the East, and sending to:

Judge Sykes Frixou (O'Callaghan - FACE Charity), York House, 23 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6YF

Fellowship and Aid to the Christians of the East is launching a prayer group to receive a monthly prayer intention for Eastern Christians. To join visit: www.facecharity.org/prayergroup

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May Devotion to Our Lady Sunday 9th May at 3.30pm at the Shrine of Our Lady of Willesden. It will include Holy Rosary and Benediction, with music from the Shrine Singers. Due to Covid Restrictions only a limited number of seats will be available for reservation. The Devotion will be livestreamed. For a link to the livestream and booking of available seats, please visit www.parish.rcdow.org.uk/Willesden

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Christian Aid Week

May 10th-16th. This is Christian Aid's 75th year of supporting the very poor in

the world where people are often forgotten by those in power. The focus this year is Kenya where water supplies are suffering from climate change. People are having to walk long distances to collect water. The money will be used to build Earth dams to trap water nearer to homes. See their website for more information. Envelopes for your donations will be in churches in Hitchin and villages. Should you prefer to donate on line please go to www.caweeek.org. If you would like an envelope delivering to you please contact Helen Richardson 07880 682681 helenwrich@btinternet.com

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A Covid-19 vaccine confidence webinar Saturday 15th May 2021 from 10am to 11.30am has been organized for the Dioceses of Brentwood, Southwark and Westminster with the cooperation of Hertfordshire County Council and Hammersmith & Fulham Council and other local authorities. It will feature a panel of eminent medical experts led by Prof Kevin Fenton, Regional Director of Public Health London. The panel will share the latest information on COVID-19 vaccination. There will be an opportunity for participants to ask questions anonymously. To join the webinar: <https://zoom.us/j/99627319556> Passcode: 546617

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Tuesday 25th May –Mass will be offered for the members of the Bethany Club who have sadly died since March 2020.

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***Message from the Parish Pilgrim*:** Thank you everyone who sponsored me for the CAFOD Walk for Water Challenge. I did find trying to walk 10,000 steps every day very difficult but I did manage to walk a total of 404,914 steps during Lent and before Easter. A total of £600 was donated by my various donors which has been given to CAFOD via my justgiving page - check out the website <https://walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/owls-walk-4-water>

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We will shortly be submitting the tax rebate claim for money donated to the Church under the Gift Aid Scheme in the tax year ending April 2021. If you have signed up for Gift Aid but no longer pay tax, please inform either David, our Planned Giving & Gift Aid Organiser, or Cheryl, our Parish Administrator, through the Parish Office so that we do not submit an inappropriate claim.

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If you are not sure whether or not you have signed up for Gift Aid or whether you have paid enough tax to cover what we will claim, David or Cheryl will be able to let you know. Similarly, if you have not yet signed up for Gift Aid, but would like to do so, it is not too late and you should contact David or Cheryl who will make the necessary arrangements for you. Also, can we take this opportunity to remind you that a Gift Aid donation must be made in the name of the person who pays the tax on the money that is donated; if that is not the case, please let us know and alternative arrangements can be made. Last but not least, can we again say a big "thank you" to all of you who have signed Gift Aid Declarations as the tax rebate plays such an important part in financing the running of the Church particularly in these difficult times.

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The Government has launched a public survey to help decide what should be included in the new ***Women's Health Strategy*** for England

They want to hear from women of all ages and backgrounds so now is the time to speak up and be heard so that the many disparities across the health service can be further evidenced and a plan can be made to deliver future improvements. Click link to access [Women's Health Strategy](#)

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Reflection by the Bishops of England & Wales
The Day of the Lord

Gathering as Bishops in Conference this week, we wish to pay tribute to all in the Catholic community who have shown such courage, generosity and

understanding in the face of adversity this past year. Across England and Wales, families and parish communities have risen to the challenge of sustaining one another through times of great isolation, loneliness and grief in an impressive variety of ways, spiritual, emotional and practical. We thank all who have worked tirelessly in prisons, in hospitals, care-homes and across the medical profession for giving of themselves so generously. We thank all who have worked valiantly in our schools, facing unforeseen demands and meeting them with characteristic professionalism and dedication.

We wish also to pay tribute to those who have given of their time and energy to keep open our churches as havens of peace and prayer. Churches up and down the land have realised the vision of Pope Francis that they be like village-wells where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey; and centres of "constant missionary outreach." We thank all who have developed diverse new patterns of outreach - of prayer, catechesis, study and spiritual solidarity; all who have made participation in the Mass possible through the internet.

Also prominent in this tribute should be thanks to all who have contributed to the immense effort of providing food for those most in need. The generosity shown in the distribution of so very many meals has given eloquent expression to the mercy, love and compassion which are at the very heart of God. Many have been touched by the joy of meeting Christ in the poor; and many of the poor by the joy of meeting Christ in selfless parishioners. The provision of food is often the first step into a deeper relationship of help and accompaniment, including the sharing of the gift of faith in our Blessed Lord.

'Vibrant' is a word which seems to have characterised so many of our parishes throughout the pandemic. We wish to salute our priests in particular for the leadership they have shown in this time of crisis. We thank them for their deep devotion to both the liturgy and to their parishioners. We commend every priest who made of his parish "a 'sanctuary' open to all" and with a particular care for the poor; and the many Deacons who have exercised with such generosity their mission of charity.

What will be the pace of our emerging from this pandemic remains as yet unclear. What is clear is the challenge we face of bringing our communities and the practice of the faith to a still greater expression and strength. As your bishops, we are aware of a threefold pattern to this challenge.

a) There are the fearful and weary, anxious about coming into the enclosed spaces of our churches; those who have simply lost the habit of coming to

church. Personal contact, clear reassurance, and sensitive invitations will all be needed.

b) There are those who will have reassessed their pattern of life and priorities. The practice of faith within the community of the Catholic Church may not be among those priorities. A gap may have opened up, or widened, between the spiritual dimension of their lives and any communal expression of that spiritual quest. They represent a particular focus and concern for our outreach.

c) There are those whom we might describe as the 'Covid curious', those who have come into contact with the Catholic Church through our presence on the internet – a contact we may be able to develop through our continuing presence across diverse media platforms.

In facing these challenges, we are endowed with veritable treasures which serve to resource and enrich us. Among them are our schools, in which so many are regaining confidence to come together with others. We believe our schools can indeed be bridges back to church. There is also the remarkable work of social outreach which has grown exponentially during these long months of pandemic. On this, too, we must build. But the greatest treasure is, of course, the sacramental life of the Church, and, pre-eminently, the Eucharist.

It is the Eucharist, the celebration of the Mass, that makes the Church; and it is the Church, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, which makes the Eucharist. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the lifeblood of the Church. It requires our active participation and, to be fully celebrated, our physical presence.

At this moment, then, we need to have in our sights the need to restore to its rightful centrality in our lives the Sunday Mass, encouraging each to take his or her place once again in the assembly of our brothers and sisters. We face the task of seeking to nurture the sense of Sunday as "a weekly gift from God to his people", and something we cannot do without; to see Sunday as the soul of the

week, as giving light and meaning to all the responsibilities we live out each day; to see the Sunday Eucharist as food for the unique mission with which we have been endowed. In the time to come we can do no better than to rekindle in our hearts, foster and encourage, a yearning for the Real Presence of the Lord and the practice of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, a gift so deeply appreciated in these times of lockdown. We need to begin by fostering this in ourselves. For the Eucharist should be the cause of our deepest joy, our highest manner of offering thanks to God and for seeking his mercy and love. We need to make it the foundation stone of our lives.

The invitation to Sunday Mass resonates all the more deeply when we consider, as Pope St John Paul II reminds us in the Encyclical Letter **Dies Domini**, that the Sabbath rest is nothing if not a call to remember the gift of God's Creation. The Eucharist is indeed a celebration of the created world, called into life by the Eternal Word, for the bread and wine of the earth becomes the Body and Blood of Christ who is that same Lord of all life. The Christ to whom we come so close in the Eucharist must be the foundation of our strivings, not least in the urgent task we face of caring for creation and our environment.

Pope St John Paul II spoke of our amazement at the gift of the Mass and the abiding Presence of our Blessed Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar. Herein lies our treasure, enriching our relationship with Jesus and bringing together every aspect of our life and mission. This is such an important focus for our task in the coming months. 22nd April 2021



The Assumption has grown quickly in Vietnam. There are now three houses in Saigon one of which is a study house for our students for the priesthood and another is an orphanage. The novitiate with seven novices is at Ba Ria. We are also responsible for a new parish at Vinh.



AMORIS LAETITIA THE JOY OF LOVE 229 *Passionate Love - God loves the joy of his children*

The Church's official teaching, in fidelity to the Scriptures, does not reject eros, but declares war on destructive forms of eros which may strip it of divine dignity and dehumanise it. (Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 25.11.05)



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 Trish Bonnett	roberthitchcock@rcdow.org.uk } 01462 459126 press 4 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