

ST ALBAN'S R.C. PARISH, WINSLOW

Pastoral Area of Milton Keynes / Diocese of Northampton

Worshipping at
St Laurence C. of E. Church
on the High Street in
Winslow



Deo vero ac vivo

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Confessions: By arrangement ; **Baptisms:** By arrangement ; **Weddings:** Catholic weddings not normally possible

The God Who Speaks: The Year of the Word

in the Catholic Church in England & Wales



**PLEASE NOTE THAT, DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, THE BISHOPS OF ENGLAND AND WALES
HAVE SUSPENDED ALL PUBLIC WORSHIP FOR THE TIMEBEING.
THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND SUNDAY MASS HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED.**

Cardinal Nichol's Address on the current situation: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/43836-2/>

Live screenings of Mass on Weekdays and Sundays (including schedule) at our Cathedral: <https://northamptondiocese.org/live/>

The text of the readings for Daily and Sunday Mass can be found at: <https://www.universalis.com/mass.htm>

THIS NEWSLETTER WILL BE UPDATED WEEKLY ON THE PARISH WEBSITE

NOTICES FOR SATURDAY, 28th MARCH, 2020—FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (4 pages)

A LETTER FROM FR ANTON TO ALL PARISHIONERS, WRITTEN LAST WEDNESDAY, 25th MARCH:

Dear Parish Friends,

Greetings to all of you during these strange and alarming times. It has taken me a while to process in my mind the fast pace of current events; I am sure it has been the same for you.

Even and especially at this moment we must continue to have hope in the Lord and trust in His merciful love which knows no end. With this in mind, I am deliberately writing this letter to you on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord in order to offer a way forward in hope for our parish based on the fruits of this event.

Put simply, the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary was the day on which Our Lady conceived the Word of God in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to fathom the depths of joy in the Spirit which Mary had, after her initial shock at what the Angel had to say to her! For nine whole months from today, He who was to be named Jesus grew in her womb. Every day of those intervening months, Mary would have pondered in her heart what the Angel had announced: that he would be an eternal King, and Son of the Most High. How much she must have longed actually to set eyes on Him when she at last gave birth on that original Christmas night!

So, the Annunciation looks forward over a period of nine months from today (25th March) to Christmas Day (25th December). In that period, Mary grows in faith and in hope, and the baby grows within her, and she is also saturated with the presence of the Holy Spirit. In spite of her new condition, she reaches out to those in need, as she does in visiting her mature pregnant cousin Elisabeth.

I invite you as a Parish consciously to dedicate these coming nine months to being especially in Mary's company, as a way forward in carrying spiritually hope in our hearts which Mary literally carried in her womb. Let us hope that, come December, this terrible pandemic with all the tragedy and suffering it is bringing, will have become largely a past event. Many of these nine months may well continue to be lived in social isolation. Be that the case, let us ask Mary to help us to become ever more aware that in Christ's presence we live and move and have our being. As our ordinary lives are silenced, may we be more open to hearing His voice speaking in the depths of our being! Over this period, while being very careful in obeying all the advice of those who have our bodily wellbeing in mind, let us, like Mary, seek out those around us particularly in need. It would have been far better had this virus never struck. But with God's grace, we can use this period to grow in faith and hope, in union with Our Blessed Mother.

By way of uniting spiritually together in this endeavour, I propose that with effect from this coming Saturday, 28th March, we pause wherever we are at 6pm each Saturday and recite the *Angelus* prayer together, which commemorates this great event of the Annunciation, Conception, and Incarnation of Jesus Christ:

*The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,
And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.*

Hail Mary, full of grace...etc.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord;

Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace...etc.

And the Word was made flesh,

And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, full of grace...etc.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

St Alban, pray for us!

St Laurence, pray for us!

The evening hour of six o'clock is a traditional time to recite the *Angelus* but it is packed with extra meaning for us as it is the time we normally begin our "Sunday" Mass together. The *Angelus* is normally said kneeling but on Sundays the forgotten custom is that it is said standing to honour the Resurrection (every Sunday, even in Lent, being the commemoration of the Resurrection). This harks back to an early Council of the Church where it was actually forbidden to kneel on Sundays and during Eastertide! So, standing—if we can—to recite this prayer will be an extra commemoration of the fact we would normally be gathering together for our Sunday Mass. Finally, do bow at the words *And the Word became flesh*, both to honour the Incarnation and as a brief bodily act of adoration and desire to receive Him who would be coming to us in His flesh and blood if we were at Mass together.

I continue to offer Mass for you all—the People of the Parish (*pro populo*)—at the earlier time of noon every Saturday in my House Chapel by the same image of St Alban which used to hang in our old chapel. Although I cannot be with you, I hold you all in my heart daily, and look forward to gathering with you once again when we have passed through the Passion and Cross of the current times. May we arrive safely together again with no loss of our loved ones—please God—and without ever having lost the hope that the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit bring.

Please continue to access the Parish website and weekly updated newsletter for new details and announcements as and when they come.

Yours fondly,

Fr Anton

BISHOP DAVID'S FIRST PASTORAL LETTER:

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. These words of the Apostle Paul root us firmly where we belong, in the grace and peace of God. Things are not turning out as we may have imagined, even a few weeks ago now, and this is not the letter I had hoped to send you as my first communication with you! It is unfortunate that the episcopal ordination took place as it were, behind closed doors. That very image speaks to us of the Easter Gospels, and the disciples gathered together in fear and anxiety within a locked room. But the coronavirus is certainly affecting every aspect of our society. We have heard so much about what it can do, how it attacks the respiratory system and can cause damage, even fatalities. Those who have political responsibility are obliged to offer sound advice to us in this state of crisis, and we must be prudent in our response to this advice. However, we should not allow this virus to rob us of the breath of the Spirit. The Holy Father encourages us to deal with this viral threat in these encouraging words, *'with the strength of faith, the certitude of hope and the fervour of charity'* (Pope Francis, March 8, 2020).

Unfortunately, the coronavirus means the need to make some drastic changes to the way we live and celebrate the mysteries of faith. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales have said that the most responsible thing for us to do, is to suspend public worship from the evening of Friday 20th March. This is an action which needs to be taken in the face of a potentially deadly virus. As you may have heard, this decision has already been made and enacted in other parts of Europe and the rest of the world. Many of our priests and faithful parishioners are over 70 and others have underlying health conditions. We have a duty of care towards them. It is an act of charity to seek their protection from this deadly thing. Of course, nothing attacks the priestly heart more than being told he is unable to serve his people and to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with them. Nothing is more painful for our faithful people, than not being able to receive the sacraments. This is a sacrifice we must reluctantly take during these weeks of a deadly epidemic. Our priests will continue to offer Mass every day, but without a public congregation. Some are able to stream their celebration of Mass, especially on Sundays. Masses and other services and devotions will be streamed from the Cathedral. I will celebrate the 11.00am Sunday Mass at the Cathedral and it will be offered for every community and individual in our Diocese.

We had hoped to be able to keep our churches open. Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament would have given much solace to thirsting souls. Since the Prime Minister's announcements on the evening of Monday, 23rd March, this is unfortunately no longer possible.

The situation is changing daily as we all seek to heed the advice of the medical and public health professionals. Again, it has to be said, we must be prudent in our response to their advice. Those responsible for advising us about liturgical matters, and especially as Holy Week and Easter approaches, will soon be able to share some guidelines with us to guide our response to this pandemic.

During these days of the Season of Lent, we have sought to join with our Saviour in His fast in the wilderness. Let's remind ourselves of the Gospel of the temptations we heard on the First Sunday of Lent. Jesus put His trust in His Father and the Word of God in the Scriptures. In Jesus' fasting from food, our Saviour learnt how to trust in God's mercy and compassionate presence. Our Lord's time in the desert echoes the earlier time that Israel spent in the Exodus journey to the Promised Land. We know how they struggled in these forty years, turning away from the Lord on occasions, entering into repentance and experiencing God's powerful forgiveness. In all of this, I love the image of God walking with His people, a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. May we know that the Lord is walking with us, His pilgrim people. Let us pray that the Lord will strengthen us all in faith and hope, and help us to see how we can live our faith and hope with fresh charity towards others.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

✠ David J Oakley
Bishop of Northampton

PLEASE PRAY FOR SICK PARISHIONERS, especially: Kenneth Lee, Yvonne Williams, Angela Dale, and Mary Lyons.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION: *My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love you above all things and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my soul so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever. Amen.*

Fr Anton hopes to add a link in the coming week for further prayers that can be said at home in the absence of Mass.

DIOCESAN NEWSPAPER: The latest edition of *The Vine* had arrived in church for collection but now, of course, the church is out of bounds! Fortunately, there is a new website which carries a digital version of the newspaper, along with those of many other dioceses in England and Wales. See www.ChurchPaper.co.uk

CAFOD LENTEN FAST DAY raised £177.00, for which many thanks.

SEDER MEAL, along with all other social events, is obviously cancelled. Thank you to Anne Hoskins who was going to do her usual great work on that evening. Please be assured that everyone will be reimbursed for their tickets.

REDEDICATION OF ENGLAND AS DOWRY OF MARY TOMORROW (SUNDAY): According to the official website, www.behold2020.com, the rededication itself on 29th March is both a personal promise of the people of England, and a renewal of the entrustment vows made by King Richard II in 1381. The first dedication was made by King Richard II in Westminster Abbey as he sought the protection of Our Lady in the face of great political turmoil. At this point, England received the title 'Mary's Dowry'; meaning that England was 'set aside' as a gift, a dowry, for Our Lady under her guidance and protection. The rededication will take place throughout the country on Sunday March 29 at 12 noon. This will happen at Walsingham (to be live streamed at www.walsingham.org.uk/live-stream), in Westminster, in Catholic cathedrals (including in Norwich which will be live streamed at www.sjbcathedral.org.uk), and now in as many homes as possible. A personal re-dedication may be celebrated at the same time in your home as watching a live-stream Mass, this would be 12 noon, the time of the *Angelus*, but may take place at any convenient time during the day. A Plenary Indulgence will be granted by Bishop Alan Hopes for all who make the re-dedication, subject to the normal conditions, however, the Sacred Penitentiary in Rome has granted a special Coronavirus Plenary Indulgence which extends to anyone who is quarantined by government restrictions. Participating in the re-dedication of England as the Dowry of Mary would qualify as one of the acts of devotion required by the special Indulgence. Guidelines for the personal rededication can be found in the book *The Angelus Promise* which can be obtained from the Catholic National Shrine website.