

## ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY SEVENOAKS

### Sunday Mass times:

**Saturday**  
6:00pm

**Sunday**  
8:00am (Latin)  
9:15am (Children's Liturgy of the Word)  
11:15am  
6:00pm

### Adoration:

**Monday** 8:30am - 9:30am  
**Tuesday** 6:00pm - 7:00pm

### Weekday Mass times:

**Monday** 8:00am  
**Tuesday** 9:30am  
**Wednesday** 8:00am  
**Thursday** 12:00noon  
**Friday** 8:00am  
**Saturday** 9:30am

### Sacrament of Reconciliation:

**Saturday**  
10:00am - 10:30am  
5:15pm - 5:45pm

### Fathers' day off:

Fr Vipin: **Monday**  
Fr Piotr: **Tuesday**



Granville Road,  
Sevenoaks TN13 1ER

Parish Office: Magdalena Wiacek  
Mon. Wed. Thurs. Fri.  
8:30am - 12:15pm  
**Tuesday closed**  
Tel: 01732 454177  
sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk  
[www.sevrcparish.org.uk](http://www.sevrcparish.org.uk)



High Street, Otford  
TN14 5PH

## MOST HOLY TRINITY OTFORD

**Mass times:** Sunday 9:30am  
(with Children's Liturgy of the Word)  
Wednesday 10:00am  
Holy Days of Obligation 10:00am  
**Adoration:** Thursday 7:30pm - 8:30pm  
Friday 11:00am - 12:00noon

### Church contact:

Barry Authers  
Tel: 01959 524362  
sevenoaksmht@rcaos.org.uk



Western Rd, Borough Green  
TN15 8AG

## ST JOSEPH'S BOROUGH GREEN

**Mass times:** Sunday 9:30am  
(with Children's Liturgy of the Word)  
Thursday 10:00am  
Holy Days of Obligation 6:00pm

### Church contact:

Antoni Offert  
Tel: 07513 041075  
sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk



Fawkham Rd, West Kingsdown  
TN15 6JP

## ST BERNADETTE'S WEST KINGSDOWN

**Mass times:** Sunday 11:00am  
Friday 10:00am  
Holy Days of Obligation 11:00am  
**Adoration:** Wed 12:00noon- 1:00pm

### Church contacts:

Jill & John Gobel  
Tel: 01474 853676  
sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk



## ST THOMAS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

South Park,  
Sevenoaks, TN13 1EH  
[www.saintthomas.co.uk](http://www.saintthomas.co.uk)

**Headteacher:**  
Ms Geraldine Leahy  
Tel: 01732 453921

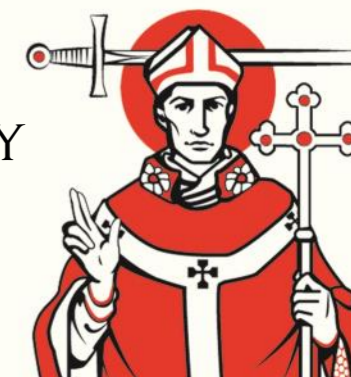
GIVE A LITTLE GIFT AID FORM



Archdiocese of  
Southwark

## PARISH OF ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY SEVENOAKS

CHURCHES IN SEVENOAKS, OTFORD,  
BOROUGH GREEN AND WEST KINGSDOWN



Parish Newsletter

24th December 2023



The birth of Jesus is the most powerful sign and message of hope in a world darkened by the shadows of fear and uncertainty. As we celebrate Christmas, our homes and streets are adorned with stars, lights, and amazing decorations, symbolising the divine becoming human. This is a time when heaven and earth join, bringing light and hope back to the world.

Among the many customs and visuals of Christmas, some reminders of its true meaning are more direct than others. So instead of saying 'put Christ back into Christmas,' let us say 'find Christ in all of Christmas.' Whenever you see a face this season, think of it as the face of God. We often pray for God's countenance to shine upon us; and in meeting God, we encounter immense and enduring love. The Christmas narrative challenges us to move beyond just sentimentality and embrace the profound truth that God's incarnation makes everything sacred. If we accept this, we are called to live differently, recognising the beauty and sanctity of the world, despite the cruelty and injustice around us. Let the secular aspects of Christmas lead us back to its holy meaning. In the coming days, be mindful of Christ in everything, and rejoice in the human face of Christ.

This Christmas, may your hearts be filled with the realization of this gift of love. Our response should be one of generous self-giving. Pope Francis emphasises this spirit of humility and generosity, especially in light of the challenges faced by the people in the conflicted parts of our world. He suggests a humbler Christmas with simpler gifts, encouraging us to support those in Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, and many other poor and troubled people, who are suffering from hunger, cold, and a lack of medical care. Let's not forget Christmas, but let's celebrate it with the people in our hearts, offering them concrete help and our prayers.

## CONTACTS & ORGANISATIONS

### **Parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, Sevenoaks**

**Presbytery and Parish Office:** 12 Granville Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1ER

**Website:** [www.sevrparish.org.uk](http://www.sevrparish.org.uk) **Tel:** 01732 454177

**Parish Priest:** Fr Peter Kucharski [piotrkuharski@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:piotrkuharski@rcaos.org.uk)

**Assistant Priest:** Fr Vipin James, [vipinjames@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:vipinjames@rcaos.org.uk)

**Parish Deacon:** Rev'd Neil Philipson [neilphilipson@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:neilphilipson@rcaos.org.uk)

**Parish Secretary:** Mrs Magdalena Wiacek [sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk)

**Parish Office hours:** Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 8:30am - 12:15pm, **Tuesday - closed**

**Safeguarding Rep:** Ken Baines [sevenoakssgl@safeguardrcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoakssgl@safeguardrcaos.org.uk)

The Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator can be contacted on 020 7261 1606; in an emergency dial 999

#### **Adoration**

Barry Authers: [sevenoaksadoration@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaksadoration@rcaos.org.uk)

#### **Altar Servers (St Thomas's)**

Catherine Ingram: [ingramfamily15@yahoo.com](mailto:ingramfamily15@yahoo.com)

#### **Catenians**

Social club for Catholic men

Aiden O'Mahony: [aidan.omahony@btinternet.com](mailto:aidan.omahony@btinternet.com)

#### **Children's Liturgy of the Word, Sunday Mass**

*Sevenoaks, 9:15am Mass:*

Mark O'Prey: [sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk)

*Oxford, 9:30am Mass:*

Catherine Bennett: [sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk)

*Borough Green, 9:30am Mass:*

Fiona Newton: [fionanewton321@btinternet.com](mailto:fionanewton321@btinternet.com)

#### **Choirs**

*Music Group:*

Lonnie Christophers [lonniechr@hotmail.com](mailto:lonniechr@hotmail.com)

*Traditional Choir:* Barbara Page 01732 454729

*Borough Green:* Chris Hurl [chris.hurl@outlook.com](mailto:chris.hurl@outlook.com)

#### **Church Cleaning (St Thomas's)**

James McSharry: [jamesmcsharry@hotmail.com](mailto:jamesmcsharry@hotmail.com)

#### **Church Flowers (St Thomas's)**

Kate Travers: [katetravers521@hotmail.com](mailto:katetravers521@hotmail.com)

#### **Confirmation Programme**

Gabrielle Ellis: [sevenoaksconfirmation@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaksconfirmation@rcaos.org.uk)

#### **Parish Finance Committee**

Secretary: Mary Scott - [3maryscott@gmail.com](mailto:3maryscott@gmail.com)

#### **First Holy Communion & Reconciliation Programme**

Catherine Tan: [sevenoaksfhc@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaksfhc@rcaos.org.uk)

#### **Gift Aid:**

Sean Corrigan: [sevenoaksgac@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaksgac@rcaos.org.uk)

#### **Holy Trinity Committee**

Secretary: Barry Authers - [sevenoaksmht@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaksmht@rcaos.org.uk)

#### **Lectio Divina**

Kathie Gonzalez 01732 761253

#### **Listening to you (Bereavement Support)**

Third Monday, 10:30am in Parish Room

Ronnie Campbell 01732 452988, Sarah Harrison 01959

522357, Kate Travers [katetravers521@hotmail.com](mailto:katetravers521@hotmail.com)

#### **Loaves and Fishes Foodbank**

Isabelle Mercer: [h.imercer@btopenworld.com](mailto:h.imercer@btopenworld.com)

#### **Mothers' Prayers**

Mondays, 11:30am at Star House, Star Hill Road

01959 532505

#### **Parent & Toddlers Group**

Tuesdays 10:00am - 12:00noon, Parish Centre

Mary Hunt 07890 229794

#### **RACET (Rural Africa Children's Education Trust)**

MaryAnn Perasso 01959 522337, [www.racet.org](http://www.racet.org)

#### **Readers, Ministers & Welcomers Rota (St Thomas's)**

Andrew Pembroke: [st.thomas.rota@gmail.com](mailto:st.thomas.rota@gmail.com)

#### **Repository**

Open after Mass on Sunday: 8:00 am & 11:15am

#### **RCIA**

For adults becoming Catholic:

Andrew Wilkinson: [sevenoaksrcia@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoaksrcia@rcaos.org.uk)

#### **Retreats**

Catherine Roger: [c.rodger@btinternet.com](mailto:c.rodger@btinternet.com)

#### **St Bernadette's Committee**

Secretary: Jill Gobel - [jill.gobel@btinternet.com](mailto:jill.gobel@btinternet.com)

#### **St Joseph's Committee**

Secretary: John Foley - [johnandmariefoley@gmail.com](mailto:johnandmariefoley@gmail.com)

#### **The Pilgrims**

For retired parishioners

Jackie Pembroke 01732 450197

#### **Scripture Fellowship**

Reading a Gospel together

Andrew Wilkinson: [andrewwilkos@gmail.com](mailto:andrewwilkos@gmail.com)

#### **St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)**

Can help financially, practically, and through visits to the

isolated or housebound. Contact Paul Boyle 07796564018 or

Kathie Gonzalez [sevenoakssvp@gmail.com](mailto:sevenoakssvp@gmail.com)

#### **Union of Catholic Mothers (UCM) (West Kingsdown)**

Monica Biggs: [mmdbbiggs@outlook.com](mailto:mmdbbiggs@outlook.com)

#### **Webmaster**

Barry Authers: [sevenoakswebmaster@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:sevenoakswebmaster@rcaos.org.uk)

## THE NATIVITY SCENE AND UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS



**G**od transcends human comprehension so greatly that the paradox of His revelation is unsettling. The Israelites sought a simpler, more human-like god. Paradoxically, the Incarnation of the One only complicated matters.

For millennia, humanity had no problem filling the concept of "god" with meaning. He was someone powerful, immortal, capricious, yet appeasable with sacrifices. But the God who reveals Himself to Abraham is not particularly interested in sacrifices per se; He seeks a living, faithful, and committed relationship. Gone is the convenient commercial arrangement (e.g., man to god a sheep, god to man rain); one must trust in His mad promises, even if there's little human reason to do so (Sara laughed upon hearing she would bear a son). This Revealing God, nameless and unrepresentable in any accepted way, responds evasively when asked His name by Abraham's grandson and blesses him. Even to Moses, He introduces Himself as "I Am Who I Am," an un-name, and strictly forbids any likeness of Himself.

Yet, He is not, as Eastern thinkers might describe, mere energy or formlessness. He doesn't expect us to dissolve into Him; instead, He engages with us, expects reciprocity, behaving like a person. So, "Quis est Deus?" (Who is God). God's word and Tradition suggest some attributes: perfect, unchanging; eternal, existing before creation; a creator, ruler of all; a lover of life, whose glory is the living human; unique, supreme; just, faithful to His covenant with man, and merciful, upholding His commitments even when His people failed. Infinitely patient, yet uncompromisingly consistent.

But when St Francis first built a nativity scene, he wanted to show the extent of God's humiliation. His contemporaries had no problem understanding the concept; they tangibly felt their finitude and the fleeting nature of earthly things. They lived in a materially poorer world, less socially and economically stable, more dependent on annual harvests and natural disasters. Even those worshipping gold and power felt, at least, fear at the thought of death and facing the Creator.

Today, the Infant in the manger can help us discover something else. That scene should discomfort us. Not because it's unhygienic – laying a newborn where animals feed is shocking. He's totally dependent, disease-prone. When offered a finger, he reflexively grabs it, as if asking, "Can I trust you?" Hungry, he opens his mouth and cries loudly for his mother if she's absent. His cry is his only defense. This is familiar; we sing about it in most carols.

So, what is shocking is that he is God. If the concept is empty to us or never thought about, we'll be momentarily moved, then move on. Yet, the nativity is a scandal, one of history's biggest. In the 13th century, it asked the faithful if they contemplated the Incarnation. Today, it asks if we understand who was incarnated, the immense distance He traversed, limiting His divinity, and His great trust in earthly parents. If we're not shocked by its sight, it questions our understanding of "God" and who/what is in our pantheon of gods.

The Triune God is beyond human measure, even though one of His Persons became human. As C.S. Lewis described Aslan, He's not a fully tamed Lion and will remain so eternally. This is unsettling, taking away the luxury of saying, "I know, I understand," but offers the chance to participate in the endless adventure of knowing Him through a relationship He constantly invites us to.

# PARISH AND OTHER NOTICES

## CRIB OFFERING

The Crib donations this year will be sent to the Catholic Childrens Society.

## CHRISTMAS OFFERING TO OUR PRIESTS

The collection taken at the Christmas Masses together with donations placed in the Christmas Offering envelopes constitutes your personal gift to the Parish clergy. This collection with the Easter collection forms the major part of the priest's income. This covers all their personal expenses – like holidays, leisure activities, books etc. Please be generous as possible. This collection is a sign of our appreciation for the priestly ministry in all our communities in a large geographical area with four churches.

You can also donate by cheque - payable to RCAS Sevenoaks (please write at back of the cheque Christmas offering) and pop into the Presbytery, or by bank transfer to NatWest Bank, RCAS Sevenoaks, Sort Code 60-19-02, A/c No 25782002).

We would like to thank all parishioners and Friends of St Thomas' Parish for your generosity and all the financial support in the past year. May God bless you. (Parish Clergy and the Parish Finance Committee)

## PARISH OFFICE CHRISTMAS BREAK

Please note, that the Parish Office will have a break from Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December and will resume on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January. Please make sure that all the urgent enquiries and Mass bookings are completed before the Christmas break.

## ST THOMAS'S REPOSITORY

We are seeking dedicated volunteers to help manage the repository at St Thomas' church. This is a wonderful opportunity to serve our church community and ensure the smooth running of our repository between Masses. Whether you have previous experience or are looking to contribute in new ways, your participation will be greatly valued. If you are interested or would like more information, please speak to Fr Peter, or Magda in the office.

## FUNERALS

Please pray for the repose of the souls of the recently deceased parishioners and for the comfort of their families.

**Gwen Farrell** aged 103, on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December. Gwen has been a stalwart and very active member of Most Holy Trinity in Otford. The Funeral Mass will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> January at noon in Otford Church.

**Valerie Celine Dias**, aged 83, a long-time member of St Thomas' community. The Funeral will be at St Thomas' on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 at 10:30am

**Sean Martin McLoughlin** aged 57. The Funeral will be at St Thomas' on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 11:30am

## LOAVES AND FISHES - SEVENOAKS FOODBANK

We would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generosity and your support for the past year. Your help has allowed us to look after an increasing number of people. We have around 50 people constantly in our book and around 40 clients visiting us every week. Considering that most of them are supporting a family, your donations go a long way! Thanks to you, our clients have access not only to non-perishable food (canned, jarred and dry food) but also to a fair amount of fresh food like bread, eggs, cheese, fruits and vegetables. Some hygiene and cleaning products are also available every week. Since the summer, we no longer distribute bags of food but people can choose whatever product they prefer.

We also try to give our client access to further help and invite other charities to attend our Thursday session to give advice on money management, mental issues, housing issues, etc. Sevenoaks (Loaves & Fishes) Foodbank is blessed with a marvellous team of very enthusiastic volunteers who make our Foodbank a really happy place to be. Everyone engages with the people we serve and our café is a great success where people are always happy to sit and have a chat.

It is only because of you that we can do all of this!

# MASS INTENTIONS

ALL MASSES ARE AT ST THOMAS'S CHURCH UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

## SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> December

6:00pm (Sat)  
8:00am (Latin)  
9:15am  
11:15am  
9:30am Otford  
9:30am Borough Green  
11:00am West Kingsdown

## SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> December

6:00pm  
  
11:30pm Midnight Mass  
8:00pm Otford  
10:00pm Borough Green

## MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

8:00am (Latin)  
9:15am  
11:15am  
*No Evening Mass*  
9:30am Otford  
9:30am Borough Green  
11:00am West Kingsdown

## Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> St Stephen, Protomartyr

9:30am Frank Haggarty's RIP  
6:00pm *No Adoration*

## Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> S JOHN, Ap Ev

8:00am Lancy Rodrigues RIP (anniversary)  
10:00am Otford Private Intention

## Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MM

10:00am Borough Green Hong Ling Chang Kit RIP  
12:00noon Tina Kirk

## Friday 29<sup>th</sup> S THOMAS of CANTERBURY, B M

8:00am Good health for Diana Latter  
10:00am West Kingsdown Good estate of Jill Gobel  
12:00noon Parishioners of St Thomas's

## Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> Sixth Day within the Christmas Octave

9:30am Brian & Martina Wilkins

## Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December

6:00pm (Sat)  
8:00am (Latin)  
9:15am  
11:15am  
*No Evening Mass*

9:30am Otford Mary & Matthew Scott RIP  
9:30am Borough Green People of the Parish  
11:00am West Kingsdown Patrick & Josephine Coakley RIP

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

In thanksgiving  
People of the Parish  
Holy Souls  
Sr Mary John  
Jill Tall RIP  
Private Intentions  
Good estate of Nolie Simmonds

## CHRISTMAS EVE

Children's Crib Service at 5:30pm  
~ Donor's Intention  
*Carols at 11:00pm* ~ Canon Luke Smith  
David Caddick RIP (birthday)

## CHRISTMAS DAY

Dec'd members of Mernock & Waite families  
Dec'd members of Rodrigues and D'Souza family  
Good health and wellbeing of Anne Power

People of the Parish  
Holy Souls  
John Lobo RIP

## FOR YOUR PRAYERS RECENTLY DEPARTED

**Gwen Farrell,**  
**Valerie Celine Dias,**  
**Sean Marin McLoughlin.**  
*Eternal rest grant unto them,  
O Lord, and let perpetual light shine  
upon them.*

## THE SICK

Diana Latter, Sue Spilstead, Elizabeth Sherratt, Philip Hardaker, Paulina Andrea, Zamora Hernandez, Mavis Mitchell Lambert, Tony Barrett, Frank Easterbrook, Lynne Stanley, Veronica Williams, Yvonne Bollen, Peter Ringham, Ann Steven, Mary & Chris Scott, Sean Cloke, Ann Farren and all in care and nursing homes in the Parish.

## ANNIVERSARIES IN DECEMBER

Margaret Welman, Anne O'Grady, Christopher Ashton, Canon Charles Tritschler, Joan Stanley, Elizabeth Dean, Stanley Waghorne, Dick Doherty, Patricia Player, John Vaughan, Piotr Oscilowski, Michael Self, David Joyce, Albinia Lunn, Geoffrey Gass, Julia Carey Stephen Hessey, John Grandi, Mary Walshe, Teresa Leigh, Joan Angibault, Percy Best, Josephine Harris, Simon Emmerson, Agnes Eccles, Anne Hardman, Winifred Chinnery, Kathleen Lambert.

## LATIN ANTIPHONS

### Entrance:

Rorate, caeli, desuper, et nubes pluunt iustum; aperiat terra et germinet Salvatorem.

### Communion:

Ecce Virgo concipiet, et pariet filium; et vocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel.