

Mass intentions

All masses are at St Thomas's CHURCH unless otherwise stated

SUNDAY 31st December HOLY FAMILY (YEAR B)

6:00pm (Sat)	Holy Souls
8:00am	Comfort of Diana Latter's family members
9:15am	Canon Luke Smith
11:15am	Nora McCaffrey
- 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

Monday 1st January MARY, the MOTHER of GOD

9:30am	Timothy & Clea Andradi RIP followed by adoration until 11.00am
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Tuesday 2nd January SS Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen, BB, DD

9:30am	Barbara Hinjenston Randolph RIP
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Wednesday 3rd January The Most Holy Name of Jesus

8:00am	Fr Eugeniusz Dryniak RIP
10:00am Otford	Valerie Dias RIP

Thursday 4th January Feria of Christmas Time

10:00am Borough Green	Mary Etheridge RIP (anniversary)
12:00noon	Bronislawa & Jozef Nycz RIP

Friday 5th January Feria of Christmas Time

8:00am	John Rodrigues RIP (anniversary)
10:00am West Kingsdown	The good estate of Anthony & Christina Gobel

Saturday 6th January Feria of Christmas Time

9:30am	Joseph & Josephine Brown RIP
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SUNDAY 7th January The EPIPHANY of the LORD (B)

6:00pm (Sat)	People of the Parish
8:00am	Theodora Wilson RIP
9:15am	Wellbeing of Mieczyslaw Kucharski
11:15am	Blessing upon Marszalek & Bochnak families
6:00pm	Alfred Micallef RIP
9:30am Otford	Gwen Farrell RIP
9:30am Borough Green	Natalia Morbi RIP (50 th birthday)
11:00am West Kingsdown	Good estate of Catherine Maher

Sunday 8:00am Mass Antiphons

Entrance Antiphon:

Venerunt pastores festinantes, et invenerunt Mariam et Ioseph et Infantem positum in praesepeio.

Communion Antiphon:

Deus noster in terris visus est, et cum hominibus conversatus est.

Please remember the sick who have been commended to our prayers, especially:

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

Kathleen Lambert, John Mullens, Desmond Cadley, Maggie Darcy, Derek Lewton-Brain, Joan Meredith, Honora Wingett, Marina Phillips, Helena Hassett, Nuala O'Loughlin, Ruth Stewart, Ethel Askew, Alice Stewart, Peter Baynes, Tim Bamford, Elizabeth Clark, Eric Doggett, Fr Freddie Broomfield, Edwin Still, Cedric Edwards, Sarah McGrath, Piotr Oskolowski, Miguel Mico, William Allen, Margaret Allen, Daniel McCarron, Eric Curtis, Sister Curtis, Philip Acton-Bostock, William Moore, Elizabeth Kiggins, Margaret Lee, Cyril Norwood, Anthony Boswell, Kathleen Mortlock, Stephen McCoy, Helen Wiseman, Sister Mary Elizabeth, Ron Henry, Martha Frizelle, Joyce Crossman, Frank Quick, Mary Power.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.

Parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, Sevenoaks

www.sevrcparish.org.uk 01732 454177



NEW YEAR WISHES FOR 2024

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St Thomas' Parish,

As we stand at the threshold of 2024, we extend heartfelt New Year wishes to each of you. This occasion not only marks a new beginning in our calendar but also symbolises the profound spiritual renewal that our faith continually offers.

The concept of beginnings holds deep significance in our Christian faith. In the Bible, the Book of Genesis starts with "In the beginning,

God created the heavens and the earth," (Genesis 1:1) signifying that every creation story, every new start, originates from God. This new year, let us embrace the wisdom that every beginning is an opportunity for God to create something new in our lives.

In Christianity, beginnings are often associated with hope, renewal, and the grace of God. They remind us that our path is constantly renewed by God's love and mercy. This is a time for us to renew our commitment to our faith, our community, and to the betterment of ourselves and others.

Let this new year be a time for growth, not just personally but also spiritually. May it be a year where we deepen our faith, strengthen our community bonds, and continue to be a beacon of hope and love in our world.

As your Pastors, we pray that God's grace will guide you throughout this year, bringing peace, joy, and fulfilment in all your endeavours. May the light of Christ shine brightly in our parish and in the hearts of all.

With prayers and blessings,

St Thomas' Clergy

Notices

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD on Monday 1st January. The Holy Mass will be at 9:30am (not 8:00am) and will be followed by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 11:00am. The Parish Office will remain closed until 3rd January.

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

The Epiphany recalls the manifestation of Jesus to the world, as its Saviour. It is a Holyday of Obligation under normal circumstances on 6th January. This year, because it falls on Saturday it is transferred to Sunday 7th January. Masses as usual on Sunday.

CRIB OFFERING

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

CHILDRENS LITURGY OF THE WORD at St Joseph's, Borough Green begins on Sunday 7th January, at the 9.30am Mass.

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 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)



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The shepherds went in haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practising the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3

A reading from the book of Genesis. The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great.' 'My Lord,' Abram replied 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless...' Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified. The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said and did what he had promised her. So, Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 104:1-6, 8-9

Response: He, the Lord, is our God. He remembers his covenant for ever.

- 1 Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. O sing to him, sing his praise; tell all his wonderful works! (R.)
- 2 Be proud of his holy name, let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice. Consider the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face. (R.)

- 3 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, the judgements he spoke. O children of Abraham, his servant, O sons of the Jacob he chose. (R.)
- 4 He remembers his covenant for ever, his promise for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. (R.)

SECOND READING Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

A reading from the letters to the Hebrews. It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.

It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: *It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on.* He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 2:22-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke. (For shorter form read between >< Lk 2:22, 39-40) >When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, < - observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: *Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord* - and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised, because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child; he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected - and a sword will pierce your own soul too - so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

>When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him <

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of conciliation, humbly asking that, through the intercession of the Virgin Mother of God and Saint Joseph, you may establish our families firmly in your grace and your peace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Bring those you refresh with this heavenly Sacrament, most merciful Father, to imitate constantly the example of the Holy Family, so that, after the trials of this world, we may share their company for ever. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday Message

THE WORD



I grew up in the 1970s, the eldest of five siblings on a family farm in rural Ireland. I was also lucky. My parents were hard-working and devoted to each other and to us.

I never saw them having an argument, I noticed the casual way they showed affection to each other; I experienced the unconditional love they had for my siblings and me.

In my innocence, I thought that's how most families were. Domestic violence, conflict, marriage break up, physical, sexual or substance abuse - these were outside my frame of reference because I had never encountered them.

So when, as a young priest, I came across cases of dreadful domestic abuse, I was stupefied. I quickly realised that we live in a world of non-perfect families, of people caught up in difficult domestic environments, very often not of their own making. And in the 35 years since my ordination, my own family has experienced its own share of heartbreak. I'm sure all our families have in one way or another.

So much about family life in the past was good - the stability of the family unit, the hard work and sense of duty and commitment to each other of so many parents and children.

REFLECT

Pope Francis sums up what families need in three words: "A big heart." That's what Jesus, Mary and Joseph had for each other. A big heart. That's what family members must have for each other. A big heart. A big heart toward a loved one whose marriage is in crisis, a big heart towards the sibling captured by addiction, a big heart toward the adolescent struggling with her sexuality or gender identity; a big heart, Francis says, even toward "those who have made a shipwreck of their lives."

A big heart kept the Holy Family together. A big heart will help sustain our families too, whatever their circumstances. ■

But we know that not everything about the past was good. Think of the culture of secrecy and shame that sent young women to Mother and Baby Homes while allowing the men to escape scot-free, the crippling hangups about sex that paralysed so many, the crushing loneliness of those who were LGBTI and dared not admit it.

Think of how marriage was often understood as a legal contract rather than a love commitment; how corporal punishment was acceptable; how the husband had more rights than his wife. It was he who made the marriage proposal, sought her father's permission to marry, put a ring on her finger, symbolising she was now his and would take his name. In many countries, marital rape was protected by law.

Thankfully, the situation has improved. We are more aware today of the complexity of the human condition, that relationships and family life are not always straightforward. Even the best families have their troubles.

In his letter about marriage and the family, *Amoris laetitia* (The Joy of Love), Pope Francis uses three expressions that are helpful to remember today.

The first is 'wounded families.' Families are not perfect, Pope Francis stresses. Try as we might, we are not perfect. We know from hard experience that the ideal of Christian marriage

and family life is hard to live, and people fall out and relationships suffer. Pope Francis calls them "wounded families," and says we must "avoid judgements which do not take into account the complexity of various situations" and "be attentive to how people experience distress because of their condition."

All families are wounded, and Pope Francis says it's okay to admit it. His letter is not a simple rehash of Church teaching on marriage and sexuality. It acknowledges our broken humanity. Perfection, as individuals or as families, is impossible this side of the grave.

The second expression is 'gradualism.' Families are a work in progress, the pope says. No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; "families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love... All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families, and every family must feel this constant impulse." We must always aim at being better - to grow all the time in holiness, patience, compassion, understanding, perfection. The Holy Family itself was a work in progress.

The third expression is 'field hospital.' The Church must be a field hospital that cleans and heals people's wounds. So many families are wounded - members who don't talk to each other, or who hurt each other, members who disappoint those they love, or make decisions that let them down. The family is the primary battlefield where these hurts are experienced. So the family must be the primary field hospital that cleans and heals these wounds. It means a willingness to forgive, to talk, to listen, to spend quality time together, to understand differences, to appreciate one another. Each family must be a field hospital that never allows wounds to fester. ■



SAY
"Lord, help me to always treat those closest to me with love and respect. Amen."

LEARN

The feast of the Holy Family was instituted in 1921, and has been celebrated on the first Sunday after Christmas since 1969. The Holy Family is seen as the model for the human family, the religious community and the Church itself. The feast is a celebration not only of the Holy Family itself but of the ideal of the Christian family on which the Church has always placed great emphasis.

DO
Reach out to a family member with whom you may have a difficult relationship.

PRAY
Pray for families everywhere, that they may grow in holiness and love. Pray for families in distress.

