

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY SEVENOAKS

Sunday Mass times:

Saturday
6:00pm

Sunday
8:00am (Latin)
9:15am (Children's Liturgy of 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



**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

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

7th January 2024



For centuries, the Star of Bethlehem, which led the Magi to Jesus' birthplace, has captured the imagination of scholars around the world. The Gospel of Matthew (2:7) describes a star that led the wise men to the child Jesus, a symbol of hope and salvation. This star, beyond its symbolic meaning, has sparked endless debates and scientific inquiries. Questions arise: Was this star a real astronomical event or a narrative tool used by Matthew? And if it was real, what could explain such a unique celestial phenomenon? These inquiries have led to diverse interpretations and theories.

Determining the exact year of Jesus' birth could potentially help explain this phenomenon. German astronomer Johannes Kepler in the 16th century speculated that a rare alignment of Jupiter and Saturn occurred in 7 B.C. This conjunction could have created the illusion of a bright star, fitting Matthew's description. Centuries earlier, Portuguese Rabbi Isaac Abravanel suggested this type of conjunction signalled the Messiah's birth.

This theory was further supported in 1925 when German orientalist Paul Schnabel interpreted ancient Babylonian astronomical records, which mentioned a similar conjunction in 7 B.C.

Father Giulio Maspero, a physicist and theologian, acknowledges this as a credible theory but also suggests other possibilities, such as a comet, or even a more spiritual explanation — the star being an angel, a divine guide for the Magi. This idea aligns with the narrative of angels in Bethlehem heralding Jesus' birth.

Another hypothesis involves a nova or supernova explosion, recorded in Chinese and Korean astronomical chronicles around 5 B.C., though this remains unconfirmed.

The true nature of the Star, whether a real astronomical event, a miraculous sign, or a narrative symbol, remains a mystery. But one thing is sure. The significance of the Star of Bethlehem in showing the connection between the physical universe and the divine. For Christians, the mystery of the Star adds to its spiritual significance. It serves as a reminder to interpret the symbols and narratives of the Gospel to understand God's messages.

What is the central meaning of the Christmas Star then? That God always answers those who seek him.

CONTACTS & ORGANISATIONS

Parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, Sevenoaks

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

Website: www.sevrparish.org.uk **Tel:** 01732 454177

Parish Priest: Fr Peter Kucharski piotr.kucharski@rcaos.org.uk

Assistant Priest: Fr Vipin James, vipin.james@rcaos.org.uk

Parish Deacon: Rev'd Neil Philipson neil.philipson@rcaos.org.uk

Parish Secretary: Mrs Magdalena Wiacek 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

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

Adoration

Barry Authers: sevenoaksadoration@rcaos.org.uk

Altar Servers (St Thomas's)

Catherine Ingram: ingramfamily15@yahoo.com

Catenians

Social club for Catholic men

Aiden O'Mahony: aidan.omahony@btinternet.com

Children's Liturgy of the Word, Sunday Mass

Sevenoaks, 9:15am Mass:

Mark O'Prey: sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk

Oxford, 9:30am Mass:

Catherine Bennett: sevenoaks@rcaos.org.uk

Borough Green, 9:30am Mass:

Fiona Newton: fionanewton321@btinternet.com

Choirs

Music Group:

Lonnie Christophers lonniechr@hotmail.com

Traditional Choir: Barbara Page 01732 454729

Borough Green: Chris Hurl chris.hurl@outlook.com

Church Cleaning (St Thomas's)

James McSharry: jamesmcsharry@hotmail.com

Church Flowers (St Thomas's)

Kate Travers: katetravers521@hotmail.com

Confirmation Programme

Gabrielle Ellis: sevenoaksconfirmation@rcaos.org.uk

Parish Finance Committee

Secretary: Mary Scott - 3maryscott@gmail.com

First Holy Communion & Reconciliation Programme

Catherine Tan: sevenoaksfhc@rcaos.org.uk

Gift Aid:

Sean Corrigan: sevenoaksgac@rcaos.org.uk

Holy Trinity Committee

Secretary: Barry Authers - 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

Loaves and Fishes Foodbank

Isabelle Mercer: 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

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

Andrew Pembroke: 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

Retreats

Catherine Roger: c.rodger@btinternet.com

St Bernadette's Committee

Secretary: Jill Gobel - jill.gobel@btinternet.com

St Joseph's Committee

Secretary: John Foley - johnandmariefoley@gmail.com

The Pilgrims

For retired parishioners

Jackie Pembroke 01732 450197

Scripture Fellowship

Reading a Gospel together

Andrew Wilkinson: 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

Union of Catholic Mothers (UCM) (West Kingsdown)

Monica Biggs: mmdbiggs@outlook.com

Webmaster

Barry Authers: sevenoakswebmaster@rcaos.org.uk

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

The very name of the feast Epiphany" (Greek: Epiphania, Theophania - coming, revelation, manifestation) indicates its Eastern origin. It seems that it was introduced in the East for the same reasons and around the same time as Christmas was in the West.

Celebrated in Egypt on January 6th, the winter solstice and its associated celebrations in honour of the Victorious Sun were replaced by Christians with the Epiphany, the revelation of Christ, the true Light of the world. On this day, the Jerusalem Church celebrated the mystery of the birth of Christ, recalling the adoration of the shepherds and Magi, while the Church in Egypt also commemorated the baptism of Christ in the Jordan.

When in the second half of the 4th century Rome began to celebrate the Epiphany, and the East adopted Christmas, the content of the Feast of the Epiphany underwent a transformation. Both the East and the West celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem on December 25th. On January 6th, the East focuses on the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, while the West on the adoration of the Magi.

Since the Gospel speaks of three gifts - gold, frankincense, and myrrh - it was believed that three Magi had come with their adoration. Influenced by liturgical texts from the 6th century, they were called kings, and from the 9th century, they were given the names Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. The cult of the Three Kings intensified in the 12th century when Emperor Frederick Barbarossa took their relics from Milan and transferred them to Cologne, where they remain in the famous cathedral to this day. In the Middle Ages, the Three Kings were venerated as patrons of travellers.

According to an old custom dating back to the first centuries, during the Mass after singing the Gospel, the faithful were announced the date of Easter and other movable feasts of the entire year.

Since the end of the Middle Ages, the custom of blessing homes has been established in many Eastern European countries, using water and incense consecrated on the Feast of the Epiphany, and writing the letters C + M + B on the doors with chalk. According to popular belief, these letters were supposed to signify the names of the Magi, but some think it is an abbreviation of the sentence: "Christus mansionem benedicat" - "May Christ bless the

house." The custom of consecrating incense and chalk has survived to this day.

The Christian tradition holds that the Three Wise Men or Magi, travelled from the East, guided by the Star of Bethlehem, to the birthplace of Jesus to pay him homage, acknowledge his divine nature, and present him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Each of these gifts carries symbolic meaning:

Gold represents Jesus' royal status. Gold, a precious metal associated with wealth and kingship, symbolizes Jesus being the King.

Myrrh symbolises Jesus' humanity and his eventual death and burial. Myrrh, a perfume and anointing oil, was traditionally used in the ancient world for embalming, thereby prefiguring Jesus' death and burial.

Frankincense represents Jesus' divine and priestly role. Frankincense, an aromatic resin used in incense and perfumes, was often used in religious ceremonies, signifying Jesus' role as a priest and His divine nature.

These gifts and acts of homage are expressions of faith in Christ as the true man (myrrh), true God (frankincense), and true King (gold). This interpretation reflects the depth of meaning found in the Christmas story and the theological significance of the Magi's journey and gifts in Christian tradition.

To us, modern Catholics, the Feast of the Epiphany extends beyond the historical event of the Magi's visitation, embodying profound spiritual and communal significance. It serves as a reminder of Christ's revelation to all humanity, symbolising the inclusivity of God's love that transcends geographical, cultural, and social boundaries. This feast invites us to recognise and welcome the divine in our midst, just as the Magi did in their journey to Bethlehem. In celebrating the Epiphany, we are called to reflect upon our own journey of faith, acknowledging Jesus as our King, God, and Sacrifice. It encourages us to offer our own 'gifts' – not material treasures, but the gold of compassion, the myrrh of self-sacrifice, and the frankincense of prayer and worship. In this way, the Feast of the Epiphany is not just a historical commemoration but a living, ongoing manifestation of faith and hope in our contemporary Christian journey.

PARISH AND OTHER NOTICES

PEACE DAY next weekend. The second collection will be for Pax Christi.

CRIB OFFERING

This weekend ends the Christmas season, and Monday is the last day of the Christmas Crib. All donations will go to support the Catholic Childrens Society.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Fr Peter and Fr Vipin thank you for your kindness and generous gifts at Christmas, and for the generous Christmas Offering of 23 348,80.

SUPPLY PRIESTS

We wish to express our gratitude for the priests who helped us with Masses and services this past year, especially Fr Bryan Wells and the Capuchin Friars for their availability and committed pastoral care.

ORDINARY TIME

Ordinary Time begins on Tuesday and continues until the Tuesday (13th February 2024) before Ash Wednesday. The weekday Mass readings are from year 2, and the Office this week is taken from the Psalter week 1.

SICK AND HOUSEBOUND

We do our best to keep in touch with those who are seriously ill or housebound, and to bring them Holy Communion. Additionally, the Parish SVP members are always willing to visit anyone who would welcome a visit. But with the best will in the world we can lose track of people, so if you or someone you know should be getting a visit but isn't please contact the Parish Office.

BECOME A EUCHARISTIC MINISTER

We are excited to offer an opportunity for parishioners to deepen their faith and service to our community by becoming Eucharistic Ministers. This role is a sacred privilege, allowing you to serve Christ and our parish in a very special way. As a Eucharistic Minister, you will be entrusted with assisting in the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass and taking it to the sick and housebound parishioners. This ministry calls for a deeper relationship with the Lord in the Eucharist, the central element of our Christian faith.

To ensure the safety and well-being of all, particularly the vulnerable, candidates for this ministry must undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check prior to commencing their duties.

The commissioning of new Eucharistic Ministers will take place on 3rd February at St George's Cathedral. We invite those interested in undertaking this blessed service to contact the Parish Office for more information and to express your interest.

This is a calling to serve in a profound and meaningful way. We encourage you to prayerfully consider this opportunity.

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. The Funeral Mass will be held on 12th January at noon in Otford Church.
- **Sean Martin McLoughlin** aged 57. The Funeral will be at St Thomas' on Tuesday 16th January 2024 at 11:30am.

ST JOSEPH'S

There will be a Local Committee meeting on Thursday 11th January after the 10:00am Mass. If you would like to be part of the Committee, please come along and contribute your ideas. If you cannot attend, you can give your ideas/suggestions to John Foley, Secretary, in advance.

There will be a Quiz Night on Saturday 10th February at 7:30pm. Tickets £10 each to include a Ploughman's supper, tea and coffee. Bring your own drinks and nibbles. Contact Jenny 07591 301 186 or Margaret 01732 885295 to book your tickets for a Fun evening before Lent starts.

I've attached the Quiz Night poster which you could add to the electronic newsletter.

ST THOMAS'S REPOSITORY

We are seeking dedicated volunteers to help manage the repository at St Thomas' church. If you are interested or would like more information, please speak to Fr Peter, or Magda in the office.

MASS INTENTIONS

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

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 Natalina Morbi RIP (50th birthday)
- 11:00am West Kingsdown Good estate of Catherine Maher

Monday 8th

Baptism of the Lord

- 9.30am Aileen Edwards RIP - the consolation of Lionel & the family

Tuesday 9th

Tuesday of week 1 in Ordinary Time

- 9:30am Wellbeing of Cliff Elsey

Wednesday 10th

Wednesday of week 1 in Ordinary Time

- 8:00am Fr Joe Andradi
- 10:00am Otford Lawrence Cronin RIP

Thursday 11th

Thursday of week 1 in Ordinary Time

- 10:00am Borough Green Sean McLoughlin RIP
- 12:00noon Mary & Henry Parr RIP

Friday 12th

Friday of week 1 in Ordinary Time

- 8:00am Health of Maureen Greensmith
- 10:00am West Kingsdown Patrick Bunton RIP
- 12:00noon Otford Funeral Mass - Gwen Farrell RIP

Saturday 13th

Saturday of week 1 in Ordinary Time

- 9:30am Marie Mernock RIP (birthday)

SUNDAY 14th January

SECOND SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

- 6:00pm (Sat) Brian Wilkins RIP
- 8:00am People of the Parish
- 9:15am Antonetta Quider Ali RIP (birthday)
- 11:15am George & Anne Anniversary RIP
- 6:00pm Annie Gordon RIP
- 9:30am Otford Wellbeing of Mary Foley & the family
- 9:30am Borough Green Ben Spinks RIP
- 11:00am West Kingsdown Josie Coakley RIP

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

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 JANUARY

Piotr Oscolowski, 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, Emma Still, Clifford Sayers, Patrick O'Callaghan, Patrick Melville-Jones, Clementina Leonard, Barry Boxall, Mary Beasley, A. Taylor, Gertrude Penny, Benjamin Rees, Margaret Piper, Richard Gaunt.

LATIN ANTIPHONS

Entrance:
Ecce advénit Dominátor Dóminus; et regnum in manu eius et potéstas et impérium.

Communion:
Vídimus stellam eius in Oriénte, et vénimus cum munéribus adoráre Dóminum.