

**This Weekend's Mass arrangements:**

Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> February:	6.00pm at St. Michael's Church
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> February:	9.00am at St. Michael's Church - <b>Children's Liturgy</b>
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> February:	11.00am at St. Oswald's Church

**Weekday Mass arrangements:**

Friday 1 <sup>st</sup> March:	7.30pm at St. Michael's Church
Feast of St. David – Patron of Wales	(Preceded by Stations of the Cross at 7.00pm)

**Parish Office closed & Father Patrick unavailable (except for emergencies) on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. to prepare for an evening Finance Committee meeting.**

Dear All,

The first reading this weekend, although abbreviated, is one of the most powerful in the Old Testament. Abraham, our Father in Faith, the first we know to have believed that there is only One God, is called by that God to sacrifice his only son, his most precious treasure, God's gift to him and his wife Sarah.

One can only imagine the anguish and struggle he felt on that journey and his questioning of the God he loved and who had promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. "How can this now be?" he probably asked. "You are asking me to destroy my only son; from whom will these descendants come?"

Abraham lived in a land where the sacrifice of children was accepted by many as a worthy offering to the gods of paganism for their blessings. Even some in Israel's history of disobedience fell into the same state of mind at times, as possibly did Abraham at this moment. Yet God is testing this loyal servant, as God tested Job in that parable from the Old Testament, as He tests us at times, enabling us to give ourselves completely to him. Abraham is being brought to learn to give up control over his own life that he might recognise and receive that life as God's precious gift calling him to become one with God. So it is for us in Lent - a journey of discovering a little more about who we are and that which we are destined to be.

Each Second Sunday of Lent we celebrate The Transfiguration of Jesus, the human image of God, on the mountain. The Saviour above all earthly things, who calls us to share Eternal Life, to rejoice in the gift of human life, in spite of the suffering Jesus warns his disciples to expect in this world. For the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom we know as Christians to be Trinity, is a God of compassion and unending love, not desiring the death of the penitent Sinner but his or her eternal glory.

**The Gift of Life**

During Lent, we are called to look beyond ourselves, energised by our Lenten journey to care especially for the needy both at home and abroad. Hence, we have at the weekend the Voluntary Collection for CAFOD's support, this year, of fishermen in Liberia needing modern

equipment and safety aids to provide for their families and of local businesses bringing food to others unable to survive without it at reasonable prices.

Sometimes, however, we may miss the needs at our front door, as did Dives in the famous parable. He passed by Lazarus each day, who lay at his front gate, not even noticing him. At the final Judgement it was Lazarus who was welcomed to the bosom of Abraham. Dives was not.

In our country, the question of direct abortion is often forgotten alongside all the other problems we face. However, our belief is that human life begins at conception, and we are called to care for that life until the moment of natural death. We should never forget that the life of our Saviour began at the moment of his conception in Mary's womb. Our concern should also be for those women who have abortions, recognising the pressures many are under, and also the risks involved in certain procedures and the mental anguish that sometimes develops.

This weekend I shall be speaking at our Masses on two important matters raised by Right to Life UK and SPUC (Society for the Protection of Unborn Children).

**Right to Life writes:**

Ask your MP to support the abortion time limit reduction amendment:

*Support an amendment to reduce our abortion time limit from 24 weeks to 22 weeks. Research indicates that a significant number of babies born at 22 or 23 weeks can now survive outside the womb, leaving a contradiction in our abortion law.*

*Take action: Collect a postcard today from the back of the church and post it to your MP urgently in support of this amendment!*

**DIY abortion policy:**

SPUC is rightly concerned about the need of Government to end the pills-by-post, do-it-yourself policy introduced during the coronavirus pandemic, especially its lack of medical safeguards putting mothers at physical and psychological risk. Cards for this will be available next weekend

**Children's Liturgy**

Takes place during this Sunday's 9.00am Mass at St. Michael's Church.

**World Day of Prayer**

**Tadley**

This year's Service will be held on Friday 1 March at St Paul's Church on The Green at 2.00pm. All are very welcome to attend and to stay for refreshments afterwards. The Service has been prepared by the Christian Women of Palestine. The theme is "I beg you...bear with one another in love". See the poster in St. Michael's Church also.

**Kingsclere**

This year's Service will be held on Friday 1 March at Kingsclere Methodist Church at 7.00pm. All are very welcome to attend and to stay for refreshments afterwards. See the poster in St. Michael's Church also.

### **Condolences**

Our thoughts and prayers are with Maryanne Sumner of our St. Oswald's community. Her husband, Ian, died last Thursday. The Funeral Service will be at St. Oswald's church in March, details to be announced. Having been in touch with Maryanne over the time of Ian's ill health, I know how sad this time is for her, and we keep her family and friends who are supporting her in our prayers also. May he rest in peace.

### **First Anniversaries of Death**

We remember this weekend Helen Warner and welcome Geoff, her brother, to the 9:00 AM Sunday Mass at Tadley, which is being offered for the repose of her soul. She died on 21st February 2023.

Also, we keep Theresa Zajac of our Kingsclere community in prayer, who died on 24th February 2023. Her daughter Marie will be here this weekend.

### **Caritas Online Networking Lunch**

Are you interested in living more simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor? Come along to this event on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March from 12:30-1.00pm where Jo Lewry from CAFOD will tell us more about the **LiveSimply Award**. Everyone welcome, please [register here](#).

### **Divine Mercy Lenten Retreat**

The Divine Mercy Apostolate, London is holding a Divine Mercy Lenten Retreat 2024 At ST MICHAEL & ST GEORGE, The Cathedral Church of the Bishop of the Forces, Queen's Avenue, Aldershot, Hampshire, GU11 2BY on Saturday 9 March 2024 from 11 am to 4 pm led by the Marian Fathers.

The Retreat will include teachings on the Message of Mercy, Stations of the Cross, Holy Mass, Hour of Mercy with Adoration and Benediction and Veneration of the Image of Merciful Jesus. All Welcome. Please call Millie on 07957594646 for more information.

### **Diocesan Vacancies**

Choral Director, Portsmouth – Closing Date: Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Data Protection Lead, Portsmouth - Currently there is no closing date

Administrator (Programmes & Governance), Portsmouth - Currently there is no closing date

Health & Safety Officer, Portsmouth – Currently there is no closing date

For these & other vacancies visit: <https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/about-us/other/jobs/>

**Further reading**

Portsmouth Diocese news items:

<https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/communications/news/enews/>

Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales news items:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/news-and-media/>

Caritas Portsmouth Newsletter:

<https://caritasportsmouth.org.uk/news-events/>

A prayerful Lent!

Father Patrick.

**Fr. Patrick Tansey****Parish Priest**

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**Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through his Church**

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