

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**Taking God's Word To Our Hearts**

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2024/29<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Missal Page 44/48/57

Elizabeth and Zechariah come from priestly families but their child, John, will be a Prophet. When John leaps in his mother's womb at the sound of Mary's voice and, when Elizabeth feels the kick inside and asks her question, it is clear that Mary has arrived carrying the fulfilment of Hebrew history. She has arrived with Jesus!

Elizabeth declares Mary as 'blessed' because she has learned how to ponder and how to trust God's Word so much that it leads to this fulfilment. Elizabeth is speaking about the mind-boggling conversation Mary has recently had with the Angel Gabriel. To her surprise and delight, Gabriel greets Mary as a reality bursting with Grace and destined for great things. This troubles her but she does not dismiss it. She ponders the meaning of phrases like 'Rejoice!', 'full of Grace' and 'the Lord is with you'. As Mary ponders, Gabriel presses on, telling her to be afraid of nothing, spelling out the mission which is being entrusted to her; bearing a Son who will be King of a Kingdom which will never end. Gabriel is awash with superlatives and extravagances. This is about God, human history and the future of the world.

Now Mary feels overwhelmed and out of her depth. She protests her lack of qualifications, but Gabriel counters this with a promise of help. The Holy Spirit will provide whatever is needed! He strengthens his case by dropping Elizabeth into the story. She is already on board, her barrenness gone forever. Gabriel ends the song with a chorus that nothing is impossible for God. Mary says 'Yes!' Gabriel departs and Mary isn't far behind as she makes her way to Elizabeth. She needs to talk to someone who can help her understand what is happening. But she isn't dashing off to the hills of Judea to check if Gabriel has told her the truth. She needs to walk with someone who can help her to explore the depths of the Word she has heard. She has come to the right place.

Notice what happens. There is no Holy huddle or tortured conversation. Mary's arrival unleashes the Holy Spirit in Elizabeth and her exclamation tells Mary all she needs to know. Elizabeth confirms Mary's Vocation and Mission. Saint Luke does not tell us what Mary's greeting was but it stirs something inside those who hear it. The one growing inside Elizabeth is a gift from God and is directed towards God. As Gabriel promised, the rules of the impossible have given way.

The astonishing conversation which unfolds between Gabriel and Mary does two things. First, in a moment of eternal tenderness she becomes the mother of the Beloved Son of God. Her Jesus.

Next, it reveals her as an amazing disciple of Sacred Scripture. She knows her Bible by heart, she ponders its meaning in her heart. She enfolds what she hears into her daily life. She is well able to start this process in others. Anyone who has drawn close to her will tell you that her friendship can touch the interior where the promise of God is growing in us, and stir it into action.

In Sacred Scripture, the Womb is a powerful reality and image for the way and the places God moves. Sometimes it is the womb or the gut which is moved when God speaks. Sometimes the image is used to encourage patience as we grow and move from darkness to light. Jesus was very fond of Parables about seeds sown in darkness. Sometimes the womb is used to describe God's knowledge of us, His nearness to us and His commitment to our happiness. It feels like it is this last one which Saint Luke is drawing on in today's Gospel. I hazard a guess that Mary's greeting to Elizabeth was a word of Peace. Jesus taught his disciples, "Whenever you enter a 'house', let your first words be words of Peace. John, the Prophet, guides footsteps in the way of Peace. In Bethlehem the angels sing the birth of Jesus like this, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth Peace to people of good will'.

Should **PEACE** not be the word that enfolds every child in the womb? In a world of violence, exclusion and alienation, Jesus lived in full communion with God and with people, with every breath he took. He was, as Sacred Scripture says, the firstborn. So, there will be others. But first, like Mary, we must become artists of the Sacred and the human.

Artists like this face only one challenge. When we celebrate the birth of Jesus, it will only be real if we are celebrating and working for the Peace of every child in every womb.





## GIVE Campaign Update #052



**\*The Dona System\*** is up and running, and because of the number of activities we financially contribute to, there is more than one screen to choose initiatives from. Please look to the arrow at the bottom of the Dona screen, and move to other screens to find the appropriate name to donate to. For example, regular Sunday contribution, Father Danny's Christmas offering, Confirmation retreat, and First Holy Communion parental contribution. There is also an opportunity to contribute ongoing to CAFOD and Bamenda, our two main charities.

**\*Father Danny's Christmas Offering\*** For those wanting to contribute to Father Danny's Christmas offering, it can be made in a number of different ways. These include the contactless Dona system, placing your contribution in the Christmas offering basket on Christmas Day services, and the Diocese has set-up a gift page that can be accessed via the diocesan website. Alternatively, please give the offering in an envelope with Father Danny's name on. God bless, Deacon Aidan.

**\*FLAME Fundraising Volunteers\*** We are seeking the support of a few parents who can assist with our fundraising efforts for the upcoming FLAME day out in Wembley next year. Your help would make a significant difference and directly benefit the whole group. Please reach out to Bernard or the office if you're able to help, thank you!

**\*Thank you\*** to everybody that returned a stamped copy of the Sunday Missal, we're now close to our original number purchased.

**\*Parish excursions\*** for older parishioners:

03/01: South Hill Park – Robin Hood & The Magic Arrow. Pantomime for adults. Cost: £26.50.

If any of these events appeal to you, please put your name down on the lists in the hall/entrance!

### Nativity Headdress

For the children's Christmas Mass at 5pm on the 24<sup>th</sup>, children are encouraged to embrace the festive spirit and wear a headdress of a nativity character! They can also bring a stuffed animal should they want to be shepherds.



### Anne O'Sullivan 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party

There are plans to have a small get-together to celebrate Anne O'Sullivan's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. The current plan seems to be refreshments and cake after the 10:30am Sunday Mass on the 5<sup>th</sup> January- more details and official confirmation to follow (please can those arranging it reach out to the office).

### Candle Boxes

Please can anyone lighting a candle in the candle boxes ensure they're at least 3 inches apart from another candle, so that they don't melt into one another and make clean-up more difficult. Thank you.



Parish Events	When?	Where?
Gospel Outreach with Music (Carols)	06/01, 1:45pm-3pm	Bracknell Care Home, RG12 7DN
Gospel Outreach with Music (Carols)	13/01, 1:45pm-3pm	Bickerton House, RG12 2JB
Gospel Outreach with Music (Carols)	22/01, 1:45pm-3pm	Bracknell Care Home, RG12 7DN
Cuppa & Chat (60+) ☺	07/01	Church Hall
Children's Liturgy (please pre-book) 👶 👶	Back soon	Church Hall
Soup & Roll ☺	10/01 (second Friday of the month)	Church Hall
Parish Prayer Group 🙏	07/01	Church Hall
RCIA 📖	Back soon	Church Hall



We pray for the repose of the souls of Patricia Doherty, Jerry Tobin and Maureen Taylor, who passed away recently. The Requiem Mass for Jerry Tobin will be held here at the church, on the 31<sup>st</sup> December at 12 noon, with the interment afterwards at Easthampstead Crematorium.

*May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

**WE PRAY FOR THOSE IN OUR PARISH COMMUNITY WHO ARE SICK, HOUSEBOUND OR IN HOSPITAL AND FOR THOSE WHO CARE FOR THEM**

Amanda Killestein	Angela Dossett	Ann D'Ambrosio	Ann Lynch	Ann O'Sullivan
Anne Hardy	Arthur Hardy	Audrey Lam	Bernard O'Neill	Beryl Pilgrim
Blanche Shap	Brenda Lynch	Bridget Riordan	Charles Hose	Claire Hose
Clarita Kokou-Tchri	Dorcas Innes-Grant	Douglas & Bernadette Hunt	Dymphna Slade	Eamon McNeill
Eddie & Flo Moore	Edmund & Kate Carroll	Inge Walker	Janet Read	Susan Tobin
Joe Rice	Leonie Macintosh	Louis Burgisser	Lucia Saligoi	Margaret Finnieston
Marie Swash	Mary King	Mary Murray	Mary Phelan	Mary Stocking
Maureen Baxter		Patricia Holmwood	Paula Sandford	Phyllis Lewis
Rico Morales	Sally Torode	Terri & Andy Landmann	Terry & Peggy McCullough	Tony Andrews
Ursula Docherty	Vilma Taborda	Vivienne Halfpenny		

To add or remove a name to this list with consent, please contact the Parish Office.

If you or your relative is housebound, or because of illness cannot come to Mass and wish to receive Holy Communion at home, call the office on 01344 425729 or email [office@bracknellcatholicchurch.org](mailto:office@bracknellcatholicchurch.org)

**PARISH OF ST JOSEPH and ST MARGARET CLITHEROW, BRACKNELL**

**Parish Priest:** Fr. Daniel McAvoy **Deacon:** Rev. Aidan Lynch

**Parish Administrators:** Francis Barton and Donna Mody

**Safeguarding Team:** Marion McGuire, Sarah Birch, Paula Read

07712 048695 [safeguarding@bracknellcatholicchurch.org](mailto:safeguarding@bracknellcatholicchurch.org)

**Parish Office, St. Joseph's Church, 39 Braccan Walk, Bracknell, RG12 1HA**

**Office Hours:** Monday – Tuesday 9:00-3:00pm, Wednesday – Friday 9:00-5:00pm

**Telephone:** 01344 425729

**Email:** [office@bracknellcatholicchurch.org](mailto:office@bracknellcatholicchurch.org) **Website:** <https://www.bracknellcatholicchurch.org>

**MASS TIMES**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: Liturgy of the Day 'O King of the nations'**

Saturday	21st	6pm	Mass	<i>Da Cunha &amp; Lessie D'Costa RIP</i>
Sunday	22nd	8:30am	Mass	<i>Carol &amp; Terry Phillips RIP</i>
		10:30am	Mass	Parish Intentions (Baby Thomas)

Monday 23rd **NO MASS**

**Liturgy of the Day 'Christmas Eve'**

Tuesday	24th	5pm	Children's Mass
		7:30pm	Carol Service
		8pm	Christmas Vigil

**THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD, solemnity with octave (Holy Day of Obligation)**

Wednesday	25th	8:30am	Mass
		10:30am	Mass

**ST STEPHEN, the First Martyr, feast**

Thursday	26th	12 noon	Mass
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**ST JOHN, Apostle, Evangelist, feast**

Friday	27th	11am 12 noon	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Mass
<b>THE HOLY INNOCENTS, <i>feast</i></b>			
Saturday	28th	10am 11am	Mass Confessions
<b>THE HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY &amp; JOSEPH, <i>feast</i></b>			
Saturday	28th	6pm	Mass Parish Intentions
Sunday	29th	8:30am 10:30am	Mass <i>Gerald Reardon RIP</i> Mass
<b>Liturgy of the Day, Sixth Day within Octave of Christmas</b>			
Monday	30th	<b>NO MASS</b>	
<b>Liturgy of the Day, Seventh Day within Octave of Christmas</b>			
Tuesday	31st	12 noon 1pm	Mass Jerry Tobin Requiem Mass Jerry Tobin Burial
<b>MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, <i>solemnity</i></b>			
Wednesday	1st	12 noon	Mass
<b>Ss Basil the Great &amp; Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops, Doctors of the Church, <i>memorial</i></b>			
Thursday	2nd	12 noon	Mass <i>Anne O'Sullivan 90th Birthday</i>
Friday	3rd	11am 12 noon	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Mass <i>Danilo Rabulan RIP</i>
Saturday	4th	10am 11am	Mass <i>David Hancock RIP</i> Confessions
<b>THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, <i>solemnity</i></b>			
Saturday	4th	6pm	Mass Parish Intentions
Sunday	5th	8:30am 10:30am	Mass Mass

**ALL MASSES ARE LIVESTREAMED** <https://www.bracknellcatholicchurch.org/watch-live>

**New to our parish or not yet registered?**

<https://www.bracknellcatholicchurch.org/parish-life/parish-registration>

**Pastoral Care 01344 425729**

[office@bracknellcatholicchurch.org](mailto:office@bracknellcatholicchurch.org)

Are you lonely? Are you ill and in need of prayer and/or support? Perhaps you have not had contact with the Catholic Church for a while. Whatever the reason, please do get in touch for a chat.

**Bereavement Support**

**07852 497 218 / 07851 200 987**

[bereavement@bracknellcatholicchurch.org](mailto:bereavement@bracknellcatholicchurch.org)

Are you in the land of loss & would appreciate a chat with someone in our group? If so, do not hesitate to get in touch.

**SVP Call IN CONFIDENCE 07731**

**862 349**

If you are struggling financially and need practical assistance, the local Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) may be able to help. Do call us in confidence for a chat.

**DONATIONS TO PARISH FUNDS** Online, Bank Transfer, DD, <https://bracknellcatholicchurch.org/give/>  
**BANK DETAILS:** Account Name: CDP Bracknell St Joseph Sort Code: 30-93-04; Account Number: 00875520  
PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO: **CDP BRACKNELL ST JOSEPH**

**JOBS AVAILABLE IN THE DIOCESE:** <https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/about-us/other/jobs>

South Berkshire Pastoral Area, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Registration Number: 119956