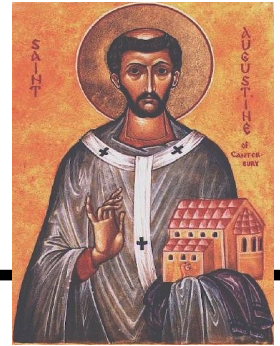




Anglican Catholic Church of St Augustine
Eastling Road, Painters Forstal, Kent ME13 0DU



PARISH NEWS

1873 - Celebrating 150 Years of Christian Witness in Painters Forstal - 2023

WELCOME

Today is

Christmas Eve

24th December
2023

The Propers of the Mass
are on page 340 of the
Book of Common Prayer

HYMNS

30

The Blessing of the Crib

42

32

26

*Happy
Christmas*



Please
Turn off Your
Mobile Phones

Dear friends,

As the sun goes down, according to tradition, the following day begins. So on Christmas Eve, the Mass we celebrate, usually at midnight, is the First Mass of Christmas Day.

This year we keep the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve on the same day. For our little congregation this will be our only Christmas Day service this year.

“Media vita in morte sumus — in the midst of life we are in death. This antiphon is attributed to the Benedictine monk Notker I of Saint Gall, who died in AD912. Legend has it that the musician and poet wrote it when he saw construction workers building a bridge over an abyss. Most likely, however, the antiphon is much older and originated in France around 750. It expresses an important Christian idea that was understood for many centuries and that we have sacrificed on the altar of modern culture — that death is about life.” (The above is taken from the website www.churchmilitant.com)

It may seem odd that at Christmas I choose to write about something that some people may consider morbid. Why, on this day when we celebrate the birth of a little Baby in the Stable in Bethlehem, celebrating new birth, do I mention death?

On 26th December, Boxing Day, the Church celebrates the Feast of St Stephen – an odd commemoration to come so hard upon Christmas, since Stephen was stoned to death early in the first century and became the First Christian Martyr. The saint was killed by a mob that was encouraged on by a man called Saul (later St Paul) – prior to setting forth for Damascus and his conversion on the road there.

But perhaps it isn't an odd thing to commemorate the Proto-Martyr so close to Christmas after all. The



wonderful feel good factor, *chestnuts roasting on an open fire, carol services, gathering family and friends around, eating lots, perhaps drinking lots too.* All of this is far removed from the original events of Jesus Christ's Nativity and what followed.

The worry that Joseph and Mary must have had trying to find somewhere to shelter for the night. The make shift arrangements in a stable. Not some nice bedroom or hospital room. The strange events of the night. Strange rough men smelling of their sheep, coming in to stare and marvel. The Feast of the Holy Innocents, commemorated on 28th December in our Kalendar. When Herod's men murdered countless baby boys in an attempt to kill the Christ Child. The wailing of so many mothers who lost their sons! No, the Nativity of Christ wasn't a nice cosy affair. Earth Shattering, History Making, World Transforming — yes! But Cosy - No!

You see, right from the beginning, as you look at that sweet new born baby in a manger full of hay. You cannot escape the fact that He is lying there in the shadow of the

December

✕

Sunday 24th

✕

Christmas Eve

6:30pm First Mass
of Christmas



✕

Sunday 31st

Christmas I

11am Sung Mass

✕

January

✕

Sunday 7th

The Epiphany (Transferred)

11am Sung Mass

Followed by Healing Service

✕

Cross. The Gift God gives us on Christmas Day, the opportunity of forgiveness and eternal life, comes at a great price. A price Jesus willingly paid to show us how much he loves us.

When St Paul encounters Jesus on the Road to Damascus, on his way to arrest more Christians: *“suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.”* Our Lord clearly identified himself with those Christians who had suffered for His sake.

Throughout the world, our brothers in sisters in Christ are paying for their Faith in Christ with their lives. It seems Christians do not attract the attention that other causes do to warrant celebrity fund raisers and charity drives. Perhaps that is because the Gospel — Good News — of Jesus Christ is threatening. It speaks of eternity when earthly celebrity has disappeared.

Perhaps God, we will not be called to martyrdom for the sake of Christ,

like St Stephen and later St Paul and the Martyrs of Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Pakistan. Perhaps we will not, like so many Christians around the world, lose our jobs, be denied education, have our Churches burnt, our children kidnapped. Nevertheless Christ identifies himself with us just as surely as with those who do suffer. Do we have the strength of conviction to identify ourselves with him?

May you have a blessed and truly happy Christmas.





CHURCH FLOWERS
To make a donation for Flowers in Church—Please see Mrs Margaret Mead

YOUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR ...

Chris Bosworth; Margaret and Laurence Mead; Diane and Mike Smith; Todd, David and Sheila; Colin Rumens; Ann Chapman; Margaret and Peter Martin; Dorothy Hipkiss; Fr Miles Maylor; Vickie Wall; Canon Charles Johnson and his family; Fr Ed Bakker; Deb Stuck; Sarah, David, Nicole and Corrina Winterburn; Malcolm Munn; Barbara Bowers; Isabella Ighodaro; Fr Howard Marsh; David Miller; John Sullivan; Roy Hipkiss; Don and Rhonda Contreras; Fr Robert McBride; Canon Don Walker, Sally and Craig Pengilly, Robin Young.

For those who read these Parish Notes on our Notice Board outside Church and all who receive email or paper copies.

- For our neighbours and the people of **Painters Forstal** and the surrounding countryside and villages, the **growth** of our **Church Family**.
- For **persecuted Christians** especially in Africa, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Middle East and China.
- **For Peace** in the Holy Land, and in Ukraine and Russia and throughout the World.

For those in our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer

- ACC Diocese of Eastern Congo, Bishop Ordinary - Rt Rev Mmokywa Mtundu Lamek;
- For ACC Churchwardens, parish councils. All ACC flower arrangers and church cleaners;
- Pro-Life organizations and a compassionate end to Abortion

And we remember the recently departed: especially Pat Johnson and those whose anniversaries fall at this time ... Roger Frederick Bell, Priest

✕ Rest Eternal Grant unto them, O Lord **R/s: And let light perpetual shine upon them**

CONTACTS

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Parish Treasurer: Mrs Kerry Scott

Organist: Mr Louis Collins

Cantor: Mr Barnabas Sharp

Caretaker: Mr Tibor Veres

Tel: 07591 149352

(Parish) www.staugustineacc.uk (Diocese) www.anglican catholic.org.uk