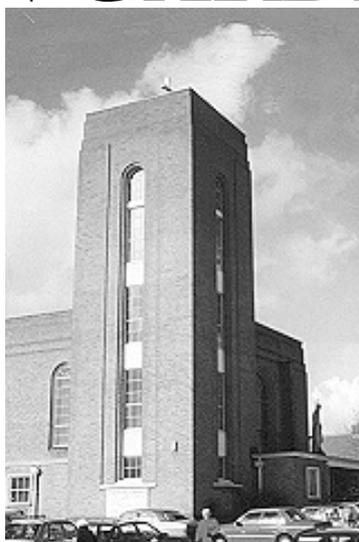


WELWYN GARDEN CITY



ST. BONAVENTURE



**OUR LADY,
QUEEN OF APOSTLES**



HOLY FAMILY

*Parish Priest: Fr. Norbert Fernandes Assistant Priest: Fr. Tony Thomas
Parish Secretary: Kathryn Hubbard*

Baptism of the Lord 10th January 2021

Isn't life complicated and challenging? The coronavirus is dominating our lives and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. There is the positive and hopeful; there is worry and uncertainty. So much is changing, almost on a daily basis. The Prime Minister's statement on Monday has taken us to the third lockdown, this time with most schooling carried out virtually and with churches still open for worship. There are parishes in our Diocese where the decision has been made not to open for a variety of reasons: the security of people coming, there being fewer volunteers who feel able to act as stewards and cleaners, the safety of priests, especially older ones.

When the first lockdown came to an end, Fr. Tony and I took the conscious decision to reduce the schedule of Masses. Our desire to make Mass available to as many as possible, in a measured way, has led to parishioners being able to come, supported by the sterling dedication of the stewards who have shown such generosity of spirit - for this we are so grateful. As the weeks have gone by in recent times, many are more fearful of coming out and being at risk. Some have had to hold back for the sake of protecting vulnerable family members at home. All is very understandable and important. Fr. Tony and I continue with public Mass and are keen to be of service to you, our people; we also, have to very careful to protect ourselves, so we can be there for you in the future. Week by week we will review how things are going and the newsletter will be the best way of keeping you in the picture. It is also possible that the Government may change its approach; we will wait and see. Let us pray for one another!

I mentioned above 'the positive and hopeful' - you must be wondering where is it?! Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. St. Mark gives us the vision of Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit and hearing the Father's voice speaking of his Beloved Son.

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This is everything! Why? Because it gives us the picture of how God sees us. The Father lavishes on us his Spirit and speaks of each one of us as a beloved son or daughter. Just as Jesus went through the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, felt abandoned on the Cross and suffered death, so we cannot run away from these hard and painful aspects of life. However, deep within his being, the Lord would have been strengthened by the Father's love. We must never forget this in the midst of our desolation. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus' choice of disciples is marked by his yearning for them 'to be with him.' As we ponder present circumstances, let us not lose sight of Jesus Christ, Son of God, as the Suffering Servant, and stay close to him. Let our love of him flow into our relationships, sacrifices and service.

Stay well and keep safe. Do your best and don't let go of hope. God bless you and your loved ones. With much love, *Fr. Norbert*

PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS IN WELWYN GARDEN CITY

As you are well aware, we are now in lockdown. The Prime Minister has still given permission for Places of Worship to be open. We have continued with the schedule of Masses established:

Saturday

10am Mass at Holy Family

6pm Mass at Our Lady's

Sunday

10am Mass at Our Lady's

6pm Mass at Holy Family

Monday

7pm Mass at Our Lady's

Tuesday

9.30am Mass at Holy Family

Thursday

9.30am Mass at Holy Family

Friday

7pm Mass at Our Lady's

The new strain of coronavirus is a worry and we still want to ensure the safety of all coming to church and of our stewards. Here are some extra changes we have made in our churches:

1. Creating greater distance between people in the pews.
2. Having more protection for the stewards by their being behind a table as people arrive and as they leave.
3. The distribution of Holy Communion will be more measured, with distancing between the 'bubbles' that come up.
4. It is even more important for people arriving at the doors of the church to keep extra space between them and those in front and those behind.
5. Socialising outside the church before or after Mass should NOT happen for everyone's well-being and safety.
6. Church heaters will switch off 5 minutes before Mass begins and more ventilation will be absolutely necessary.

CONFESSION Only by appointment - Fr. Tony on 01707 327434 or Fr. Norbert on 01707 323234. *All necessary precautions have to be undertaken in terms of distancing and the safety of priest and penitent.*

DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER

The current position and role of our churches in this phase of the pandemic

We are aware that questions are being asked as to why churches remain open during this National Lockdown. We are also aware that many local authorities are calling for places of worship to close. We wish to respond to these concerns.

Churches are allowed to open for prayer and communal worship at this time according to the provision of the most recent national legislation and Government guidance. This decision is based on two factors: the recognition that our churches are safe, and that the service they offer is essential.

The safety of our churches has been affirmed by Public Health England in its current advice to the Government. This is publicly recognised to be the result of the great efforts made by many people in the implementation of procedures mandated by PHE and thereby establishing the necessary conditions within churches for their safe use.

Our churches are making a significant contribution to the personal resilience and inner strength of people which is much needed at this time. Many are hubs from which essential support is offered especially to those most in need, extending well beyond the faith communities which use them. This includes the regular provision of food; the care of the homeless; and being a place of peace and reflection (which is safe) for many whose living conditions are very limited. This will become more appreciated as the programme of vaccination increases. The vital link between prayer and action is important to maintain this service.

At this phase of the pandemic, which is causing alarm and fear, our churches will exercise their role with increased diligence to ensure continuing safety and service.

Our clergy will ensure that all are aware that there is no duty or responsibility to come to church and communicate to all there is no obligation to attend Mass on Sunday. They will review, in each local area, the provision offered by the church in order to ensure that the highest standards of safety are maintained. This will include a review of the role of stewards, the provision of additional social distancing within the church, a review of cleansing routines, and consideration of the personal circumstances of the priest(s) and people. On this basis there will be a local evaluation and decision about the possible reduction in the times of opening and the frequency of communal worship.

In conclusion we recognise the higher levels of fear and anxiety which the new strain of the virus has prompted and we have a very proper awareness of the care which must be exercised by everyone, under the guidance of PHE health professionals.

We recognise, too, that isolation is having a profound detrimental effect on people and that the role of churches in easing that isolation in ways which are safe and supportive has been recognised as a positive and beneficial contribution to the common good.

We pray for the dedicated work of the NHS and continue to provide spiritual support to staff and patients through the network of chaplains working both in the hospitals and the community.



Bishop John Sherrington
Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster 8th January 2021

STREAMED MASS

[youtube.com/c/WelwynGardenCityCatholicChurches](https://www.youtube.com/c/WelwynGardenCityCatholicChurches)

We continue to stream Mass on Sunday at 10am

FACEBOOK PAGE

<https://www.facebook.com/Welwyn-Garden-City-Catholic-Churches-113038463699672/>

Gospel reflections, the latest news, live rosaries and so on.

MASS ON RADIO

If you are aware of someone not on the internet who would like to follow Mass, RTE Radio broadcasts Mass on 252 Longwave. For those who have a digital radio, Radio Maria broadcasts in London on DAB+ and in the Cambridge area on DAB.

OUR LADY'S CHAPEL looks out onto the car park of the new Parish Hall which means that people can come to the windows and look into the Chapel and see the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady's statue. Not ideal in the cold, but a possible place to offer a (quick) prayer.

MASS INTENTIONS Fr. Norbert and Fr. Tony are celebrating the Mass Intentions week by week. If anyone wants Mass offered for a particular intention, please let Fr. Norbert or Fr. Tony know. Donations for the Masses can be made at a later stage. The intentions will be published in the newsletter as below.

This week Masses have been celebrated for: Diana Attard RIP 3rd Anniv (5 Masses), Barbara Wilson RIP, Maria Karmela and Family Farrugia Int, George Mangion and Family Mangion Int, Alec and Mary Noonan's Int, In thanksgiving to St. Jude.

VIRTUAL COFFEE MORNING Do you miss catching up with fellow parishioners after Mass? During this lockdown we're introducing a Virtual Coffee Morning on Thursdays at 10.30am, beginning 14th January. Simply make yourself a coffee, sign on to Zoom and catch up with some familiar faces or make new friends. Please email Fr Tony (tonythomas@rcdow.org.uk) for the Zoom meeting details. We hope to see you there!

FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF OUR PARISHES The financial support of parish life is crucial and needed. Please consider using the Virgin Money Giving links on the parish website. There are standing order forms available to download on the website too. We realise that things are very challenging financially at present and do not want to put any extra burden on you. However, for those in a position to contribute to our churches, we ask you to find the best way of giving. Our thanks to you for your generosity and co-operation. *We are NOT going to have the Planned Giving Boxes of Envelopes for the coming year. Please consider changing to standing order as a way of giving.*

FOOD BANK New Zion Christian Fellowship continues its Food Bank every Wednesday 9 - 11am. If you are able to drop off non-perishable food for the needy members of our community, New Zion is happy to receive contributions from 8am on a Wednesday. The address is 140 Cole Green Lane AL7 3JE. If anyone would like to make a financial contribution to the Food Bank, please email foodbank@newzioncf.net and you will be given details as to how to make a donation.

SIGNED MASSES On the first Sunday of the month at 4.30pm, there will be a signed Mass streamed with a split screen: Shell Roca, Director of the Deaf Service, will respond in sign as Fr. Norbert celebrates the Mass in sign. This will be in place of the monthly Mass from the Cathedral. All welcome to follow and please give the details to any deaf or hard of hearing people you know.

PRIEST'S REFERENCE FORMS Parents who will need a 'Certificate of Catholicity' for Reception class or Nursery should download the form on this website called 'Request for a Certificate of Catholicity'. Fill it in and return to Fr. Norbert who will then contact each family to arrange for a Certificate to be issued.

ST ALBANS The Catholic Mass at St. Albans Cathedral takes place at 12 noon every Friday. Admission to the Cathedral Mass does not require ticketing and there is social distancing in a very big space in the nave. All welcome!

LUKE'S CALENDARS IN AID OF CAFOD have been selling well and there is still time to get yours for the New Year.

Due to Tier 4 lockdown they will be sold online only from his website www.lukesphotography.co.uk/shop and will be delivered to your home.

SACRAMENTS

Regulations - as of 8th January 2021

Baptism is permitted with only **6** present, including the child. Please contact Fr. Tony or Fr. Norbert directly.

Weddings are possible (in limited circumstances) with **6** present. *If you are planning to get married this year or next in WGC or beyond, please let Fr. Norbert know so that the necessary preparation and paperwork can be organised.*

Funerals can take place with **30** mourners maximum.

Confirmation 2020 Dates have been set.

SACRAMENTS 2021

On the Parish Website, you will find forms to download:

First Holy Communion (and Confession) - Children should be at least in Year 3

Confirmation - Young people should be at least in Year 9

Adults for the Sacraments

Adults who wish to join the Catholic Church through Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion or Adults already baptised in a Christian Church who wish to be received into the Catholic Church or Catholic Adults who missed out on Confirmation when younger.

Our plan is to use the Season of Lent to do the preparation and celebrate the Sacraments soon after Easter. (Dates haven't yet been decided) It is not ideal but this past year has had so many ups and downs with dates due to lockdown and worries about the coronavirus. We do not want to put extra pressure on families or individuals at a time of much uncertainty. We want adults and children to share in the life of the Church through the Sacraments.

Most of the preparation will be done at home with families/individuals and there will be Zoom plenary sessions to keep everyone in touch. We will do all we can to keep people safe and not be at risk whilst encouraging formation for the Sacraments.

At this stage we need to know names and details so we can be in touch. Please return the forms to Fr. Norbert as soon as possible. Email addresses are really important. Thank you for your co-operation. Let's do our best!

**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING
10TH JANUARY**

Saturday 9th January

1 John 4:11-18 '...since God has loved us so much, we too should love one another.'
Mark 6:45-52 Jesus walks on the water and says: 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.'

Sunday 10th January BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 'Here is my servant...my chosen one...'
Acts 'You must have heard about...Jesus of Nazareth...'
Mark 1:7-11 The scene of the Baptism of Christ

Monday 11th January *First Week in Ordinary Time (Year 1)*

Hebrews 1:1-6 'He is the radiant light of God's glory...'
Mark 1:14-20 The beginning of the Lord's public ministry

Tuesday 12th January

Hebrews 2:5-12 Jesus sanctifies us through his suffering
Mark 1:21-28 Jesus teaches and heals

Wednesday 13th January

Hebrews 2:14-18 Jesus is 'a compassionate and trustworthy high priest...'
Mark 1:29-39 Many people come in search of Jesus

Thursday 14th January

Hebrews 3:7-14 '...keep encouraging one another...'
Mark 1:40-45 Jesus reaches out to the leper and touches him, bringing him healing

Friday 15th January

Hebrews 4:1-5, 11 Aiming to reach a place of rest
Mark 2:1-12 The healing of the paralytic and the forgiveness of his sins