

DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



## SS PETER AND PAUL, TORREVIEJA

*The Church of England worshipping in Word and Sacrament at Lago Jardín, Los Balcones and La Siesta and ministering through the southern Costa Blanca and eastern Murcia.*

*A truly Eucharistic community of faith and love.*

Chaplain (equivalent of Parish Priest):

Father Richard A. Seabrook SSC

+ 34 966 840 136

+ 34 693 932 438 – Chaplaincy Mobile

frras@c-of-e-torrevieja.com

[www.c-of-e-torrevieja.com](http://www.c-of-e-torrevieja.com)



Chaplaincy Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/anglicantorrevieja>

Chaplain's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/chaplainortorrevieja>

Chaplain's Facebook Group (to be used at the moment for livestreaming of liturgies):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/chaplainortorrevieja/>

### THE CHAPLAIN'S WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

GAUDETE SUNDAY



**WELCOME TO THE CHAPLAINCY OF SS PETER AND PAUL, TORREVIEJA.  
ALL ARE WELCOME TO SHARE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THIS  
CHAPLAINCY.**

### FINANCIAL GIVING TO THE CHAPLAINCY

There are various ways of giving financially to the Chaplaincy for the work of the Church:

You can give in the plate each week.

You can join our envelope scheme to give a regular amount on a weekly basis – and set aside money for those weeks when you cannot be here.

You are encouraged to set up a standing order to the Chaplaincy – this helps us budget more effectively.

If you are a UK tax payer you can gift aid your giving.

If you are a Spanish tax payer you can have a tax offset by notifying your accountant when arranging your yearly tax along with the Spanish bank account number who will then arrange a claim and the money will be donated back to the Chaplaincy.

One off donations would be gratefully received to assist us at this difficult time.  
Thank you for your help.

For more information contact Father Richard, the Churchwardens, or your Congregational Warden.

### THE PANDEMIC AND THE MONTHS AHEAD

Church services have resumed in accordance with Spanish Law, the advice of the Bishops of the Diocese, the advice of the Spanish Episcopal Conference and FEREDE.

1. Lago Jardín Church will remain closed until further notice. This is because of the difficulty of social distancing in the church and its already limited capacity.
2. There is to be a building project to renovate the church but **Los Balcones church is now closed until April 2021. All services for the Chaplaincy will be held at La Siesta.**
3. La Siesta - these services will be for the whole Chaplaincy so please make every effort to be there and support the liturgical life of the Chaplaincy as we begin again in limited circumstances.

Future celebrations of the Holy Eucharist at La Siesta are:

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> December | 1700   |
| Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> December   | 1130   |
| Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> December   | 1030 - THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD              |
| Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> December   | <b>1400</b> – Please note the change in time |
| Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> January     | 1130   |
| Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> January   | 1700   |
| Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> January    | 1130   |
| Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January  | 1700   |
| Saturday 30 <sup>th</sup> January  | 1700   |

The live-streamed liturgies continue:

1. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/chaplaintorrevieja> and ask to join the group.
2. You will be asked three questions. Please complete them and agree to the rules of the group.
3. When the livestream starts it will appear on your device in the Facebook stream. The stream will start a few minutes before the broadcast so you can get settled in. You can only see this when I start the livestream. You can see and hear me but I cannot see you.

We will very much be adopting a hybrid approach for the foreseeable future.

On the Sundays where there is a Mass at La Siesta, there will be a live-streamed Mass on Saturdays at 1700 so that those unable to come to church will still be able to see Mass celebrated.

On the Saturdays where there is a Mass at La Siesta, there will be a live-streamed Mass on Sundays at 1100 so that those unable to come to church will still be able to see Mass celebrated.

The weekday live-streams will continue. The general pattern is:

|           |   |               |      |
|-----------|---|---------------|------|
| Monday    | 1100  | EP            | 1800 |
| Tuesday   | 0930  | EP            | 1800 |
| Wednesday | 1100  | EP and Rosary | 1800 |
| Thursday  | 0930  | EP            | 1800 |
| Friday    | no live stream (Father Richard's rest day)          |               |      |
| Saturday  | no live stream in the morning, Mass when indicated. |               |      |

There will also be a liturgy still included in the weekly sheet for those unable to access the internet. This means there will be "physical" worship, live-streamed worship and "printed" worship.



## **Church of England Chaplaincy of SS Peter and Paul, Torrevieja**

**We are a Covid 19 secure Chaplaincy.**

**The list of full instructions can be obtained from Father Richard, the Churchwardens, the Secretary or Joan Berry. Please bear in mind your own self-care, your level of vulnerability and your age according to the risks involved.**

**If you have COVID-19 symptoms please stay at home.**

**Under present regulations, the maximum number permitted at La Siesta is 32.**

**You need to let Sue Maude know ([wardenlasiesta@gmail.com](mailto:wardenlasiesta@gmail.com)) each week if you are coming.**

**This is so we can implement the regulations correctly.**

**Worship for the week ahead:**

|                                |      |   |                      |
|--------------------------------|------|---|----------------------|
| Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> Dec  | 1700 | Vigil Mass                                    | <i>La Siesta</i>     |
| Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> Dec    | 1100 | Holy Eucharist                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
|                                | 1800 | Evening Prayer                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
| Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> Dec    | 1100 | Holy Eucharist                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
|                                | 1800 | Evening Prayer                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
| Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec   | 0930 | Holy Eucharist                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
|                                |      | <i>No live-streamed Evening Prayer today.</i> |                      |
| Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 1100 | Holy Eucharist                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
|                                | 1800 | Evening Prayer<br>and Holy Rosary             | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
| Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec  | 0930 | Holy Eucharist                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
|                                | 1800 | Evening Prayer                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
| Saturday 19 <sup>th</sup> Dec  | 1700 | Vigil Mass                                    | <i>Live-streamed</i> |
| Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec    | 1130 | Holy Eucharist                                | <i>La Siesta</i>     |
|                                | 1800 | Evening Prayer                                | <i>Live-streamed</i> |

**Father Richard writes:**

Today is Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word for *Rejoice*. A brief respite from the rigours of Advent, rose is the liturgical colour today and we light the rose candle on the Advent wreath. Today achieved its name because in old Latin Mass the first word you would have heard this day was "Gaudete" from the entrance antiphon "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice...The Lord is at hand." Words from S. Paul's letter to the Philippians. The Lord is at hand. Let us use these days of Advent wisely and contemplatively to prepare to meet the Lord in our celebration of his Nativity and to be judged by him when he comes again in glory and majesty.

Let's all continue to pray for each other in generosity, love and charity. Let us ask the Lord for his guidance. Be assured that your prayers are joined with the saints, especially Our Lady, the Holy Mother of God and our patrons, Ss Peter and Paul.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.

Your priest and friend,                      Father Richard

**DATES AHEAD / SOCIAL AND FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES**

**Christmas Hamper** – 1<sup>st</sup> prize: a Christmas hamper, second prize: wine. A card with numbered squares will be in church from **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November** and each turn costs 2€. The lucky square will be drawn on **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December**.

Donations of chocolate, biscuits or bottled spirits (we have sufficient bottles of wine) or other Christmas produce would be appreciated by Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November so that the hamper can be put together. **Fundraiser.**

### **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December**

#### **CHAPLAINCY CHRISTMASS QUIZ at the Olive Tree Restaurant, San Miguel de Salinas**

Minimum number required twenty people; maximum number possible thirty people because of regulations and social-distancing. Please give names to Sandra Harbut as soon as possible. The cost is €15 (which does not include a tip). A deposit is required to secure your place (which will be refunded if it is necessary to cancel because of any lockdown.) Sandra has the menu. Jill is organising the quiz. This is usually a very popular event so don't delay in getting a ticket. There will be a raffle and donations of prizes are requested. **Fundraiser.**

**Please try to support these efforts to raise funds for the on-going work of the Chaplaincy.**

### **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December (at La Siesta Church)**

#### **1800 A SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS (at La Siesta Church)**

Again, this will have to be different this year. However, it will be followed by a Chaplaincy Christmass Dinner at La Cosecha Restaurant between Benijofar and Algorfa. **We can arrange car transport from La Siesta after the Carol Service if you are not sure how to get there.** It is a three course Christmass menu or you can order from the a La Carte Menu and the cost is €18.95. It includes drinks. The dinner is at 8 p.m. Names to Liz Shouksmith and it has to be paid for in advance (not including tip.). Liz has more details.

#### **Jill's Homemade Marmalade**

Jill Dorsett is now selling homemade marmalade after each service. Please see her if you would like to buy / order some. Thank you Jill!

#### **Some aids to worship:**

For Evening Prayer, if you wish to join in the common texts they are follows:

Angelus – *see later in the newsletter*

Introduction - + O God, come to our aid.

**O Lord, make haste to help us.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.**

**As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.**

**Amen. Alleluia!**

Magnificat: + **My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.**

**The Almighty works marvels for me.**

**Holy his name!**

**His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him.**

**He puts forth his arm in strength**

**and scatters the proud-hearted.  
He casts the mighty from their thrones  
and raises the lowly.**

**He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.**

**He protects Israel, his servant,  
remembering his mercy,  
the mercy promised to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his sons for ever.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

*"Participants in a streamed service of Holy Communion should not be encouraged to place bread and wine before their screens. Joining together to share in the one bread and the one cup as those physically present to one another is integral to the service of Holy Communion; ... and it is not helpful to suggest otherwise. Any idea of the 'remote consecration' of the bread and wine should be avoided."*

The words above are an extract from a letter from Bishop Robert and Bishop David from 2nd April. Under Church of England formularies the Priest himself must set the bread and wine upon the Altar which is going to be consecrated during the Eucharist.

This post underlines The Church of England position.



### **The Blessed Sacrament Lamp at Lago Jardín**

Because Lago Jardín is not going to be used for the foreseeable future (until social distancing rules change) the Blessed Sacrament has been removed from Lago Jardín to be kept safely at the Chaplaincy House.

If you would like a Mass intention, please contact Father Richard.

### **The Chaplain's Prayer List for December 2020:**

*Please pray for the sick and those in particular need at this time:*

Laura Risquez and her family, Keith Simmons, Luke Thompson, Andrew, Kathryn Moore, Fr Brian, Andrew, Isaac Jalal, Cathy Neil, Danny Gidman, Denise Taylor, Dorothy Hanson, Eileen Catlin, Father Helge, Solveig Pettersson, Gwen Simmons, Gerry Hopkins, Benjamin Saville, for all those suffering in mind, body and spirit as a result of the coronavirus.

### **Please pray for the recently departed:**

*For all those who have died as a result of the coronavirus.*

+ Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

**Please advise Father Richard if there are any corrections to the above list.**

*If you wish a name to be added to the list of the sick you need to email Father Richard or write to him giving permission for yourself or ensure permission has been granted by someone else for their name to appear on this list. (GDPR regulations).*

*Please pray for the Anglican Church in Perú, for Bishop Jorge Aguilar, and the Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Laity there.*

**Father Richard's Study Group...** will resume when we can.

### **From the Churchwardens:**

It has been so good to see so many of our congregations returning to Church and we thank the dedicated team who prepare for worship and deep clean afterwards. We must also thank those who have been putting their giving away and have now brought it back to Church. This is really needed as is the continued giving to maintain the life of our Chaplaincy. The ideal for the Chaplaincy would be for people to set up standing orders or direct debits. This allows us to have a good idea of what we can expect to receive and plan our finances.

If you feel you can manage to set up a standing order. The bank details to do this are as follows:

**Spanish Bank details.** Banco Sabadell. IBAN number ES65 0081 2061 7900 0106 0414 / BSAB ESBB / Capellania Anglicana de Torrevieja

**UK Bank details.** Barclays Bank PLC Account name: Diocese in Europe Fund

Account number: 40317039 Sort code: 20-06-13. Please state TORREVIEJA as the reference so the money is correctly applied.

Thank you so very much for your help,

*Peter and Jennifer*

### **Making a Spiritual Communion. Something recommended for us all each day when we cannot participate in the Holy Eucharist.**

Even if we are watching a livestreamed Mass (and the times of our Chaplaincy livestreamed celebrations of the Eucharist are listed in the newsletter) we are invited to pause when the Priest receives Holy Communion and make our own spiritual communion. We can say it silently to ourselves or speak it out loud. In this way we are joined with Our Lord in his suffering and death for the world and we are united to His Most Sacred Heart. In these most worrying of days we know Our Lord is there and we can join ourselves to him just as he joins himself with us. This is a great blessing, comfort and strength.

Choose one of these prayers:

*My Jesus,  
I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.  
I love You above all things,  
and I desire to receive You into my soul.  
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart.  
As though you have already come, I embrace You as if You were already there  
and unite myself wholly to You.  
Never permit me to be separated from You.  
Amen.*

or,

*Lord Jesus Christ, you are the bread of life and the one true vine. I believe that you are truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. I seek you. I worship and adore you. Since I cannot receive you in the eucharistic bread and wine, I pray that you will come into my heart and soul, that I may be united to you, by your all-powerful and ever-present Holy Spirit. Let me receive you, and be nourished by you. Become for me the manna in my wilderness, the bread of angels for my very human journey through time, a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, and solace in the hour of my death. I pray all this, trusting that you yourself are our Life, our Peace, and our everlasting Joy. Amen.*

#### Prayer resources

1. Look at the pages of the Church Union, a well-established organisation in the Church of England: <https://www.churchunion.co.uk/news.php>
2. You are invited to say the *Angelus* at 0600 (!), or better still 1200 and 1800. The services of livestreamed Evening Prayer begin with this.
3. Lastly, and most importantly, make a Spiritual Communion. There is more about this in this newsletter.
4. *Praying at home with the Blessed Virgin Mary*  
The Society of Mary has produced a booklet of readings, reflections and prayers that focus on some of the themes that are important at these times; and how Mary is an example for us, as well as someone who prays with us and for us.  
[https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/SoM\\_May\\_2020\\_Marian\\_Devotional\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/SoM_May_2020_Marian_Devotional_Booklet.pdf)
5. Devotions and Prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.  
[https://www.sswsh.com/uploads/Sacred\\_Heart\\_of\\_Jesus\\_Devotions\\_and\\_Prayers.pdf](https://www.sswsh.com/uploads/Sacred_Heart_of_Jesus_Devotions_and_Prayers.pdf)
6. Praying in Church.  
[https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Praying\\_in\\_Church\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Praying_in_Church_FINAL.pdf)
7. Praying with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.  
[https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Blessed\\_Sacrament\\_Resource\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Blessed_Sacrament_Resource_FINAL.pdf)
8. A series of homilies. **Homilies from an SSC Priest**  
As lockdown began, it became clear that the way in which we worshipped as communities, and the way in which we taught the faith were going to have to change. This is a series of homilies by one priest of the Society of the Holy Cross (SSC) who ministers in North London.  
In this series he explores through the great Feasts of the Church's year just how the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on our faith.



- [https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/SSC\\_priest\\_homilies.pdf](https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/SSC_priest_homilies.pdf)
9. A booklet on the Rosary from the Society of Mary, a devotional society in the Church of England.  
[https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Rosary\\_Resource\\_SoM.pdf](https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Rosary_Resource_SoM.pdf)
  10. Responding to the psalms, a devotional resource (attached this newsletter).
  11. From the Guild of All Souls, *Praying for the sick, dying, departed and bereaved*.  
[https://www.guildofallsouls.org.uk/uploads/7/0/6/7/7067171/praying\\_for\\_the\\_sick\\_dying\\_departed\\_and\\_bereaved\\_-\\_nov\\_2020.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0flfh-QBXR1Me5O9QbTfpFxZkr8bnmq-EMOGSpHyB7FRWSvCrkij3u1s](https://www.guildofallsouls.org.uk/uploads/7/0/6/7/7067171/praying_for_the_sick_dying_departed_and_bereaved_-_nov_2020.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0flfh-QBXR1Me5O9QbTfpFxZkr8bnmq-EMOGSpHyB7FRWSvCrkij3u1s)
  12. From the Church Union: *O Radiant Dawn* – A resource for Advent  
[https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/O\\_Radiant\\_Dawn\\_final\\_version.pdf](https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/O_Radiant_Dawn_final_version.pdf)
  13. *Saints of the month - DECEMBER*  
Although we are praying and worshipping in our homes, we never pray alone. We pray with the Church around the world and our prayers are joined with those of the company of heaven. In this booklet there are a selection of biographies of saints and holy people whose feast days occur this month, as well as prayers you might find helpful.  
[https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Saints\\_of\\_the\\_Month\\_December\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.churchunion.co.uk/uploads/Saints_of_the_Month_December_FINAL.pdf)

### **IMPORTANT LETTER ABOUT CHRISTMASS IN THE CHAPLAINCY FROM FATHER RICHARD**

Dear friends

May the Lord find us all watching and waiting this Advent. The Lord be with you.

Christmass this year will be, for obvious reasons, different. At the moment, we are limited to thirty-two people at La Siesta. This may change on December 9<sup>th</sup> when the Comunidad Valenciana regulations are revisited. However, there will still be limits on capacity.

There are three services at La Siesta for which I recommend you register *as soon as possible* and certainly before December 9<sup>th</sup>. This will, I hope, give you the assurance of a place at these services. It is best to be prepared now.

|                                  |             |                                      |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> December | <b>1800</b> | A Service of Nine Lessons and Carols |
| Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> December | <b>1030</b> | Holy Eucharist                       |
| Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> December | <b>1400</b> | Holy Eucharist                       |

Please note the above times.

There is no Midnight Mass this year. We cannot expect people to be cleaning the church at a quarter to one in the morning and, moreover, there is a curfew.

Please would you contact Sue Maude ([wardenlasiesta@gmail.com](mailto:wardenlasiesta@gmail.com)) to make a booking for these services. This means regular worshippers in the Chaplaincy will have an opportunity to book first before the services are more widely publicised.

I thank Sue for managing this.

Thank you for your co-operation.

With my continued prayers at this difficult time,

Yours sincerely  
Father Richard

### **Sunday 13 December 2020**

#### **Entrance Antiphon**

**Phil 4: 4-5**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.  
Indeed, the Lord is near.

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#### **Collect**

O God, who see how your people  
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,  
enable us, we pray,  
to attain the joys of so great a salvation  
and to celebrate them always  
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
(one) God, for ever and ever.

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#### **First reading**

**Isaiah 61:1-2,10-11**

#### **He has sent me to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord**

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,  
to bind up hearts that are broken;  
to proclaim liberty to captives,  
freedom to those in prison;  
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.  
'I exult for joy in the Lord,  
my soul rejoices in my God,  
for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,  
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,  
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,  
like a bride adorned in her jewels.

'For as the earth makes fresh things grow,  
as a garden makes seeds spring up,  
so will the Lord make both integrity and praise  
spring up in the sight of the nations.'

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### **Responsorial Psalm**

**Luke 1:46-50,53-54**

*My soul rejoices in my God.*

My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her nothingness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

*My soul rejoices in my God.*

The Almighty works marvels for me.  
Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him.

*My soul rejoices in my God.*

He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.  
He protects Israel, his servant,  
remembering his mercy.

*My soul rejoices in my God.*

---

### **Second reading**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

#### **May you all be kept safe for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

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### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Is61:1(Lk4:18)**

Alleluia, alleluia!

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me.  
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor.  
Alleluia!

## Gospel

John 1:6-8,19-28

### 'There stands among you the one coming after me'

A man came, sent by God.  
His name was John.  
He came as a witness,  
as a witness to speak for the light,  
so that everyone might believe through him.  
He was not the light,  
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:  
Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

## Reflection

Children are great with questions. As any parent knows they can ask the most profound questions in the simplest of ways. We all ask questions because, at heart, we have an instinct for seeking and searching after truth. This is a life-long search. We can never get to the point in this life where we can say, 'I now have the total truth.' The gospel declares that God is truth — and God is always beyond us. We can never fully grasp God with our minds or our hearts. Yet we have to be faithful to the search for truth, even if along the way we find ourselves making painful discoveries that involve letting go of long-held and cherished convictions. We keep trying to come closer to the truth, the truth about our world, about each other, about ourselves as individuals, and about God. We keep questioning in the hope that our questioning will bring us closer to the truth.

In our search for our own personal truth, two of the big questions that drives us are, 'Who am I?' and 'Why am I doing what I am doing?' We seek after our identity, in the broadest sense of that term, and we try to clarify for ourselves the ultimate purpose that drives all we do and say. In today's gospel, those two big questions are put to John the Baptist by the religious authorities, 'Who are you?' and 'Why are you baptizing?' In answer to the first question, John began by declaring who he was not. He was clear that he was not the Christ, the Messiah. John did not try to be more than he was. Later on in the gospel of John, using an image drawn from a wedding celebration, he would say of himself that he was not the bridegroom, only the friend of the bridegroom who rejoices at the bridegroom's voice. In this morning's gospel John declares himself to be the voice crying in the wilderness; he is not the Word, only the voice; he is not the light, only the witness to the light. When John was

asked why he was doing what he was doing, why he was baptizing, he declared that he baptized to make known the 'one who stands among you, unknown to you.' He did what he was doing to open people's eyes to the person standing among them, to the Messiah who was in their midst without their realizing it. There was a great light shining among them that many were unaware of, and John had come to bear witness to that light. John did what he did because of who he was. The answer to the question, 'Why are you baptizing?' flowed from the answer to the more fundamental question, 'Who are you?' "What do you say about yourself?"

"What do you say about yourself?", is a question we can answer at different levels. We can simply give our name, or give our parents' names; we can answer it by giving our professional qualifications, or by naming the role or the position we have in life. Yet, the deepest level, the most fundamental level, at which we can answer that question is the spiritual level. Who am I at that deepest, most spiritual, level of my being? Who am I before God? Who is God calling me to be? Here, John the Baptist, the great Advent saint, can be of help to us. He articulates for us who each one of us is in virtue of our baptism, who God is calling us to be. No more than John the Baptist, we are certainly not the Messiah. We are not the light. We know only too well the areas of darkness in our lives and in our hearts. However, like John the Baptist, we are a witness to the Light. Even though we are all far from perfect, we are, nonetheless, called to be a witness to Christ.

John the Baptist says: "there stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me." Jesus Christ stands among us, but he remains unknown to many. Perhaps we could do more to make him known, to let his light shine in our world through our example. The Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness, a voice to invite people into relationship with God. We too are asked to use our voice to make Christ known. We can use our gift of communication to spread faith in Christ and illustrate his values and his attitudes. In our behaviour too, we can let the Lord communicate through us. If we realise our calling to be witnesses to the light, it can shape how we live and explains why we live the way we do. The answer to the question, 'Who are you?' grounds the answer to the question, 'Why do you do what you are doing?' Advent is a good time to reclaim our fundamental identity, our Christ-linked identity. If Jesus is to be born anywhere today, it will be in the hearts of his followers.

*An Irish Priest*

### **The Nicene ("Niceno-Constantinopolitan") Creed**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
*At the words that follow, up to and including 'and became man', all bow.*  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### **THE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Let us pray to our generous God, who fills the starving with good things.

1. For all the world, that the birth of the Redeemer may bring hope (*pause for quiet prayer*). Lord, hear us.
2. For those who follow Christ, that they may experience joy at this time of year (*pause for quiet prayer*). Lord, hear us.
3. For people whose hearts are broken, that God may bring them comfort (*pause for quiet prayer*). Lord, hear us.
4. For victims of violence or abuse: that they may experience compassion (*pause for quiet prayer*). Lord, hear us.
5. For homeless and hungry people, that they may have the help that is their right (*pause for quiet prayer*). Lord, hear us.
6. For people suffering because of war, that the whole world may help them (*pause for quiet prayer*). Lord, hear us.
7. For those who have died (especially N and N), that they may rejoice in God eternally (*pause for quiet prayer*). Lord, hear us.

God of generous love, your mercy continues to embrace the world: hear the prayers of your people, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Hymn:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFzbxnMnxZc>

## The Angelus



The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary,  
And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,  
Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy  
womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now  
and at the hour of our death.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.  
Be it unto me according to Thy Word.

Hail Mary, (as above)

And the Word was made flesh,  
And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, (as above)

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.  
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of thy son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His + cross and passion we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

## THE BISHOP'S ADVENT APPEAL

The COVID-19 pandemic has hurt communities throughout the world. Many communities are not equipped with even the most basic of hygiene and sanitation facilities, and lockdown measures have increased economic hardship in the poorest communities with people unable to work. We are raising funds to support virus prevention and emergency relief for vulnerable communities throughout our Anglican family.

The Anglican Communion Fund (ACF) has already begun responding to COVID related needs, allocating over £180,000 across 21 provinces of the Communion. The ACF is supporting the Church in its ministry, providing food relief to the vulnerable, communicating ways of staying safe from the virus, and providing handwashing facilities and PPE.

In the South Sudanese Diocese of Maridi, an ACF grant provided food items, soaps and seeds to over 200 pastors and lay-readers and provided bicycles and hand microphones for pastors to carry prevention messages into remote areas. Speaking of the support, Bishop Moses Zungo said, "You held our hand during our most trying moments."

*There will be collection basket at the back of church each week during Advent. If you wish to Gift Aid your donation to the Diocese please place in one of your GA envelopes and mark it clearly **Bishop's Advent Appeal.***

*Thank you.*