



Oratory of St. Francis de Sales
Roman Catholic Parish
Archdiocese of Southwark

Parish Newsletter 24th December 2023
White Friars Church Road, Hartley, Kent DA3 8DW
Tel: 01474705361 Email hartley@rcaos.org.uk
Web: <http://saintfrancisdesales.org.uk>



This parish is served by the Spiritans

StFrancisDeSalesHartley
 sfdhartley sfdhartley

<https://tinyurl.com/vc7w838m>

St. Francis de Sales Live Stream: www.churchservices.tvhartley

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Mass Book Year B Vol 1 page 90

On this fourth and last Sunday of Advent, today's celebration is an excellent song to God's everlasting love revealed in his covenant with his servant David. The mystery of the Old Covenant will soon be revealed in Mary, the ark of God's New Covenant.

In our first reading, in appreciation of God's love, David wished to build a house for God. However, God would not allow him. Instead, God made a promise to David. And sealed it with a covenant. This promise and covenant will soon be fulfilled.

In our second reading, Paul gives God glory for giving him the strength to preach the good news. He equally throws more light on the fact that Christ is the Mystery kept hidden for ages. His revelation is the salvation of the world. This good news is the mystery that God himself concealed in the old covenant.

As we continue our preparation for Christmas, we must continue to give all glory to God for what he is about to do in our lives and our world. Hence, Paul's message today sets us on the track towards the incarnation of God's Word, which is very close at hand.

The Gospel of today presents us with two important figures; first, the angel Gabriel appears with a message about the fulfillment of a promise. It is also about the revelation of the hidden mystery of the old covenant in the new. The second figure is Mary; she receives the message with humility: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me." Mary's faith was a statement of her total self-donation to God's own will for our salvation and of her generosity, courage, and love for humanity. Through her generosity, Mary reminds us that this is a season of joy, receiving, and sharing.

Today, as the angel brought the good news to Mary, so must we continue spreading this message.

THE CHURCH IS OPEN:

Tue-Fri 8:45am-4:00pm

Sat 10:00am-6:30pm

Sun 7:45am-12noon

SUNDAY MASS

Sat 23rd December

5:30pm Vigil Mass

Int. People of the Parish

Sunday 24th December

8:30am

NO MASS AT 10.15am

NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Sunday 24th December

5.30pm: Vigil Mass for families with children

8:00pm Midnight Mass

Monday 25th December

9:30am: Christmas Day

WEEKDAY MASS

PLEASE NOTE: NO MASS
on Tues 26th, Wed 27th,
Thurs 28th, Friday 29th
December.

CONFESSIONS

Saturday 4:30-5:20pm
or by appointment

Christmas message from Fr Alphonsus.

As our Advent journey comes to its fruition with the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us begin this joyous Season of Christmas with hearts and minds full of peace, hope, joy, and love. May I take this opportunity to say Thank-you for all the Christmas cards and greetings I have received, and I return this love and all good wishes to each one of you and your families and friends.

To everyone who will be visiting our parish this Christmas, welcome, and to those who will be travelling away from the parish – I wish you all a safe journey and return. May the peace of the Lord be with you.

PARISH OFFICE HOURS: TUES, THURS, FRI 10.00am-2.00pm - Tel 01474705361

Parish Priest: Fr Alphonsus Beni CSSp

Email: alphonsusbeni@rcaos.org.uk (Day off: Mon)

PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL THE PRIEST

DIRECTLY FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Tel: 07500262446

Parish Secretary: Jane Pemberton

Parish Council Chair: Chris Pieroni

Email: hartleypcc@rcaos.org.uk

Safeguarding representative: Judith Stephens

Email: hartleysg2@safeguardrcaos.org.uk

TEXTS FOR THIS WEEK— 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

2 Samuel The kingdom of David will always stand secure before the Lord

Res Psalm: *I will sing forever of your love, O Lord*

Romans The mystery, which was kept secret for endless ages, is now made clear.

Luke Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son.

Comm. Antiphon: *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be Emmanuel.*

TEXTS FOR CHRISTMAS MASSES

VIGIL MASS

Isaiah The Lord takes delight in you.

Psalm Res *I will sing for ever of your love, Lord.*

Acts Paul spoke of Christ, the son of David

Matthew The ancestry of Jesus Christ, the son of David.

C. Antiphon The glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh will see the salvation of our God

MIDNIGHT MASS

Isaiah A son is given to us

Psalm Res. *Today a saviour has been born to us; he is Christ the Lord.*

Titus God's grace has been revealed to the whole human race.

Luke Today a saviour has been born to us.

C. Antiphon The Word became flesh and we have seen his glory.

MASS DURING THE DAY

Isaiah All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Psalm Res. *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*

Hebrews God has spoken to us through his Son.

John The Word was made flesh and lived among us

C. Antiphon *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*

For Daily Prayers and Mass Readings online, visit
<https://www.universalis.com>

PRAYER FOR THE SICK & HOUSEBOUND

Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son in the Eucharist. We now place before you all the sick and housebound of our parish. As they share in this Eucharist with us, we pray that they may come to know the depth of your love for them and, the joy, the peace, and healing of your presence. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord Amen

VISITING THE SICK AND HOUSEBOUND

If you or someone in your family is housebound and would like a priest to visit, please contact Fr Alphonsus or the parish office to arrange a visit.

ST FRANCIS DE SALES PARISH CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

**The Parish Christmas Raffle will take place on the
24th December 2023 after 8.30am Mass**

Tickets are still on sale: £5.00 for a Strip of Tickets or a £1.00 a Ticket. All proceeds will go to our church.

The Prizes are Fantastic Hampers
full of Goodies to suit all Ages.

If you are unable to attend Mass and would like to take part, please contact the Parish Office on 01474 705361 or by e-mail at hartley@rcaos.org.uk **before Sunday** and Tickets can be arranged.

The Draw is open to everyone and all can enter.
We are currently taking Cash or Online Payments.

**Please give generously and
Good Luck.**

PARISH NOTICES

ST FRANCIS DE SALES 200 CLUB

Our Christmas Draw will take place on Sunday 24th December after the 8.30am Mass. There will be 3 prizes of £100, £70, and £50. Membership for the 200 Club is open to anyone over 16yrs and costs £24 annually per draw number for the chance to win a prize each month. All necessary information & forms can be found in the church or on the parish website.

PLEASE CAN YOU HELP WITH CHURCH CLEANING - WE ARE URGENTLY SEEKING VOLUNTEERS.

Please consider if you/your family/friends might spare 1-2 hours each month to help on a rota basis with light cleaning, dusting & vacuuming. Please contact the parish office for details. You can form your own team of helpers and assistance would be at hand. Any help will be much appreciated, thankyou.

CHILDREN'S LITURGY AND YOUTH GROUP TEAMS- ADULT VOLUNTEERS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED.

If you would be interested in joining the Leaders' Team for Children's Liturgy or the Youth Group, please speak with Fr Alphonsus who will then pass your details to the parish Safeguarding Rep and put you in touch with Victoria or Laura to explain more about these ministries. Anyone wishing to volunteer must first have completed a DBS Check for Ministry with Children/Youth Group in the Catholic Church. No previous experience is necessary and you will be guided through any necessary training. Thankyou.

Archbishop John Wilson's Christmas Message 2023

Dear friends,

The past year has, once again, been tragically filled with conflict and war. With innocent lives lost in Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, the Holy Land and other places where bloodshed has blighted peace.

In the face of war, we pray for peace and urge the international community to find lasting solutions. We remember that the Gospel is the Good News of Peace. It comes to us, through Mary's 'yes' to God's will. It comes to us through the Lord Jesus, the new-born Prince of Peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must all be missionaries of peace, proclaiming the Good News of God's love for every person and honouring the dignity of every person.

Christ comes to us as our Saviour. Our Saviour from sin and death. Christ comes to us with the gift of peace for our hearts, our families, communities and our nations.

We look to the coming New Year to be one of peace and we pray, give, and receive this precious gift.

In preparation for the Jubilee year of 2025, our Holy Father Pope Francis has designated next year, 2024, as the year of prayer. The call to prayer is one we all can and should embrace. Often – too often – we think of God as distant or indifferent. We can put up barriers between ourselves and between God, shutting him out, not trusting his love, and not seeking his mercy.

Instead, let's use prayer to come close to God. Let's turn again to his Son, the Lord Jesus, with our hopes, our dreams, our worries and our thanks. From now, looking forward to next year, let's give prayer a go.

Because prayer is strength for the weak. It will never make things worse, and can only make them better. The biggest challenge to praying is just beginning. You can only learn to ride a bicycle by trying it out. It's the same with prayer. Even just praying the Our Father when we wake up and as we go to sleep at night will make a difference to our lives.

If we ask, we will be heard. If we seek, we will be found. If we knock, the Lord Jesus will open the door. Prayer builds peace. So next year, pray to welcome Christ into your heart. Go on, give prayer a go.

I pray that everyone who hears this message will have a blessed and wonderful Christmas, and I ask God to bless you, and all those you love, in the year to come.

May the Lord's peace be upon us, that His Kingdom may come.

REGULAR NOTICES

PARISH REGISTRATION

We welcome all new parishioners to St Francis de Sales, Hartley. We want you to feel at home in the parish. **Please introduce yourself to the parish priest and then register on the Parish Database.** Forms are available in the porch, or on the parish website. Consider how you can support the parish with your talents and resources and submit a **'Sharing my Time & Talents'** leaflet, also available in the church porch. Thankyou and Welcome.

MASS INTENTIONS

If you would like to have a Mass offered for an intention, please fill in a brown Mass Offering envelope the porch, and return it to Fr Alphonsus.

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL (SVP)

'We are a small group who offer confidential support through phone calls, house visits, accompanying to local medical, dental appointments. We also offer confidential financial support. Contact us via the parish office.'

OUR LADY OF HARTLEY RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

For the latest information and school news, visit us at www.ourladyhartley.kent.sch.uk

DONATION BOX FOR GRAVESEND FOODBANK

Non perishable items can be left in the Food Bank Box in the Meeting Room or in the porch. Thankyou

'SEEKING SANCTUARY' - support for migrants

Donations of warm clothing and toiletries can be placed into the blue box in the Meeting Room. Please visit <https://seekingsanctuary.weebly.com/>

CATECHETICAL PROGRAMMES

Parishioners are asked to first check the **SACRAMENTS** section on the parish website for general information on the programmes. Please speak with Fr Alphonsus for any further advice. Those wishing to enrol for Sacramental programs should be registered parishioners, attending Mass.

BAPTISM FOR BABIES AND INFANTS

Parents of infants and those seeking Baptism, please attend weekend Mass and speak with Fr. Alphonsus afterwards to register for the Baptism Course.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION 2024

Any young person in school Yr8 or above who would like to be confirmed next year, please speak to Fr Alphonsus for an application form, thankyou. We hope to begin preparation classes in January 2024, if there is a sufficient number of candidates.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING TO THE PARISH PRIEST

Please use the Christmas Offering envelopes that are in the porch and note your Gift Aid number on the envelope. If you donate by Bank Standing Order, please mark your donation 'Christmas Offering.' You may also use the Cashless Machine in the porch, or via *Givealittle* on the parish website Donate options.

FUNDRAISING THROUGH SHOPPING ONLINE

Do you shop online? If you do, you can raise donations for the parish at no extra cost to you! Please visit www.easyfundraising.co.uk

'PLANNED GIVING' and GIFT-AIDED DONATIONS

The parish relies on contributions to maintain the church building and presbytery, supporting the priest in his ministry, which is the Church's Mission. Please consider setting up a Monthly Bank Standing Order. This is most helpful to the parish for budgeting and planning projects.

Other ways to support the parish financially are:

- (i) Weekly Gift Aid Envelopes (via Parish office)
- (ii) Through *Givealittle* on the parish website
- (iii) Using the Contactless Machine in the church
- (iv) Cash, or Cheque payable to **RCAS Hartley**
- (v) Using the One-off Donation white envelopes
- (vi) Online transaction to Nat West Bank Account St Francis de Sales Acc: 34143580 S.C. 60-06-33.

OFFERTORY COLLECTIONS 17th December 2023

Envelopes: £31.00 Loose Plate: £33.10

Contactless: £20.00 Online banking: £290.50

2nd Collection: £47.45 Thatch Fund: £42.00

Thank you for your contributions to support the parish.

Please check that your GA number with the correct date & collection name are noted on your envelope. Thankyou

This week's 2nd Collection: Catholic Children's Society

Our Christmas Crib Box will be placed next to the Nativity Scene during the Christmas Season – all donations will go to the Children's Society Crisis Fund.

THATCH FUND

Funding raised: £40,478.05 of our Target £55,000.00

Thankyou for your continued support! Please keep depositing your £1 weekly donation in the Thatch Fund Box at the back of the church OR use the Contactless machine in the porch. You can also set up a £4 monthly/£52 annual, Bank Standing Order at:

Nat West Bank. Account name St Francis. Account number 34363181 Sort code 60-06-33.

If you are a UK tax payer, please submit a Gift Aid declaration form - **online** (follow directions below) or **hard copy** (on the shelf in the church porch) If you already use the parish Gift Aid scheme, *please* note your GA number against any donation. If you do not know your GA number, please contact the parish office for assistance. You can also donate via our parish *Justgiving* page at www.justgiving.com/St-Francis-de-Sales-Hartley OR via *Givealittle* on the parish website.

Are you a UK Taxpayer? Please consider joining the Parish Gift-Aid Scheme. Simply scan the QR code with your phone and fill in the form or visit the web link. Please contact the parish office for any assistance. Your support is greatly appreciated. Thankyou



PARISH GROUP MEETINGS

YOUTH GROUP

All young parishioners are welcome members. Contact: Laura Bourne via hartley@rcaos.org.uk

ADULT CHOIR

Thursdays at 7:30pm. New members are welcome Contact: Yvonne at yhegarty@talktalk.net

KNIGHTS OF ST. COLUMBA

Third Wednesday each month at 7:00pm in the meeting Room. New members very welcome. Contact: William Rons williamrons@hotmail.com

CATHOLIC WELCOME CIRCLE (CWC)

Second Wednesday of the month in the Meeting Room 2:00pm. Contact: Margaret Walsh.

BEREAVEMENT GROUP

Please contact the parish priest to arrange a visit.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL (SVP)

Monthly meetings arranged by the SVP group. Contact can be made through the parish office.

CATENIANS (Meopham Circle)

First Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Hartley Country Club. Contact Les Bober on 07811 407386 or Steve Lewis, on 07305 360305 if you would like to learn more about us.

For a newsletter emailed weekly, or to suggest articles/additions, contact the parish secretary: hartley@rcaos.org.uk. **Newsletter items received after 11.00am Thursday may not be included that week.**

Editor reserves the right to edit articles. A parish of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.

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