



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF  
OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION,  
FOSTER AVENUE, BEESTON,  
NOTTINGHAM, NG9 1AE  
and  
ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CHURCH,  
TAMWORTH ROAD,  
LONG EATON, NG10 1DH



**Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocese Trustees Company No. 7151646 Charity No. 1134449**

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TIMES OF MASSES AND OTHER SERVICES: FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: B

**First Week of Advent: 29<sup>th</sup> November – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (Weekday Cycle Year I / Psalter Week I)**

<b>Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November:</b>	<b><u>Weekday Feria</u></b>	<i>Your Prayers are requested for those who are sick:</i> Isobel Alana Barnes, Marica Borsos, Jessie Breame, Margaret Brown, Fr John Cairns, Pat Constable, Francesca Lina Craparotta, Jim & Margaret Dougan, Fr Theodore Gomes, Ann Harrison, Fr Peter Harvey, Andrea Hoffman, Breeda Keaney, Anne – Marie Reid, Alan Roberts, Simpson Family, Evelyn Venning and John Wilcox.
<b>Mass;</b>	<i>Special Intention</i>	
<b>Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November:</b>	<b><u>First Sunday of Advent: Year B</u></b>	<b>HOSPITALS</b> A number of priests are still trying to maintain an 'on – call' rota for City and QMC. This is strictly calls for Anointing of the Sick when someone is nearing the end of their life. The hospital will not call us out for a request for prayers or when someone has already died – these will be dealt with by a member of the Chaplaincy Team who may or may not be a Catholic minister. Holy Communion is not being taken into hospital by Eucharistic Ministers. Families should not contact a priest directly to visit their loved one in hospital – all requests need to go through the Ward and Chaplaincy Department. QMC 0115 924 9924 ext. 63799 or City 0115 969 1169.
<b>Mass;</b>	<i>Daniel Dunsmore RIP</i>	
<b>Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November:</b>	<b><u>St Andrew, Apostle &amp; Patron of Scotland (Feast)</u></b>	
<b>Mass;</b>	<i>Prop Populo; People of the Parish</i>	
<b>Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December:</b>	<b><u>Advent Feria</u></b>	
<b>Mass;</b>	<i>Pat &amp; Breege Munnelly RIP (Anniversary)</i>	
<b>Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December:</b>	<b><u>Advent Feria</u></b>	
<b>10:00 am: Mass;</b>	<i>Patricia Lewis &amp; Family</i>	
<b>Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December:</b>	<b><u>St Francis Xavier, Priest (memoria)</u></b>	
<b>Mass;</b>	<i>Private Intention</i>	
<b>Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December:</b>	<b><u>Advent Feria</u></b>	
<b>10:00 am: Mass;</b>	<i>Elizabeth Reilly RIP (Breame)</i>	
<b>Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December:</b>	<b><u>Advent Feria</u></b>	
<b>Mass;</b>	<i>Special Intention</i>	
<b>Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December:</b>	<b><u>Second Sunday of Advent: B</u></b>	
<b>10:00 am: Mass;</b>	<i>Ernest Strickland RIP (Marie)</i>	
<b>THE ABOVE MASSES WILL ALL BE SAID PRIVATELY AS ALL PUBLIC ACTS OF WORSHIP ARE SUSPENDED UNTIL AT LEAST 2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 2020!</b>		
<b>The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the Church of St Francis of Assisi are closed to members of the public, until further notice at least 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. The Parish Hall of Our Lady of the Assumption and the Parish Hall at St Francis of Assisi will remain closed to members of the public, until further notice If you urgently wish to contact Fr Christopher please telephone 0115 922 8145 (at any reasonable time). For enquiries or to book a Mass, please also do this via the telephone. Stipends can be posted or given at a later date, but for the foreseeable future if you book, or have already booked a Mass Intention, then this Mass will be Celebrated in private.</b>		

**Items for the newsletter can be given to Fr Christopher or e – mailed to [frcathomas@live.com](mailto:frcathomas@live.com) by Thursday of each week for inclusion in the next issue.**

**REQUIESCAT IN PACE:** Please remember in your prayers to pray for the repose of the soul of *James Loughrey* who died on *Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020*. James's Funeral will take place at Bramcote Crematorium on *Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020*. Also, for *Joan Lynch* who died on *Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020* at Melton Mowbray. Joan's Funeral will take place in Church on *Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020* at *11:00 am* followed by Burial at Beeston Cemetery. We remember them both and their families at this sad time. May they rest in peace.

**POOR CLARES:** The Sisters send their sincere thanks for the donations they have received from our Parishioners when I visited them on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October. They are all well and managing to stay safe and they want you to know that you are all in their prayers every day. The next visit will be *Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020*. Thank you for continuing to support them. – *Diane Wilson*.

**MISSION – RED BOXES: LAST CALL FOR BOX EMPTYING** Although Covid 19 has made the emptying of Red Boxes extremely difficult this year, we are now approaching the end of the year when totals for 2020 need to be sent in and boxes emptied and the contents banked. I am willing to collect and return your box if this is easier for you – social distancing observed of course – and my phone number is on the label underneath the box. Please can you call me to arrange a collection time or if you possible can drop your box off at Church this would be appreciated. Many thanks for your help and continued support at this difficult time – *Diane Wilson Parish MISSIO Secretary*.

'The Diocese of Nottingham are inviting you to join others from across the diocese in preparing for and celebrating Christmas:

**PRAYING WITH OUR LADY THROUGH ADVENT:** We invite you to pray one extra Hail Mary each day in Advent, asking for Our Lady's prayers to help all of us as a Diocese, open our hearts and minds to welcome Jesus afresh this Christmas. She was the first person to welcome Him into her life and her intercession can help us to draw closer to Him and feel His presence with us anew this Christmas. Every other day you will be able to watch people from our Diocese pray the Hail Mary in different languages on the Diocesan social media sites, search for Diocese of Nottingham or Bishop Patrick McKinney on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

**LIVING ADVENT PODCAST:** Living Advent is a weekly podcast series throughout Advent exploring the virtues of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace with people from across the Diocese and how we can live them out. We speak to a young husband and father, a musician, a retired social worker and a police officer. You can find it on your usual podcast service by searching '*Living Advent Podcast*' or visit: [www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/podcasts](http://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/podcasts) for links on how to stream or download it.

**DIOCESAN CAROL SERVICE:** Carol services are a wonderful family tradition of our Advent and Christmas celebrations and often are a great opportunity to invite those who are not regular Churchgoers to connect with our Parish or Chaplaincy community. This can be quite challenging to do this year so we are offering a Virtual Diocesan Carol Service. We will celebrate a short online carol service on *Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 6pm* on Bishop Patrick's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/BishopPatrickMckinney> with readings, music, prayers and reflections. Please join us as a family and invite others to join us too. After the service grab a mince pie, something warm to drink and join us on zoom for our Family Christmas Quiz (6:45 – 7:15pm). The link and access code will be given out during the service.

**"BEING A DISCIPLE WEB SERIES:"** January is a time when we try and work at being a better person, why not explore how we can be a grow as a disciple of Jesus? On the *4 Thursdays of January 2021* we will explore a different aspect of what it means to be a Catholic disciple with Brendan Thompson the CEO of Catholic Voices in a web series on Zoom. Catholic Voices are an international organisation that shares the Good News in the global media. This will be a great foundation for Parishes, Chaplaincies and individuals to explore how we can support each other in growing as Catholic disciples. Register for the series here: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMrCuygqjwpGdNBRC5NIO46Eu1bleEg246A> For information on how to access things on zoom visit: [https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/information/diocesan-commissions/01\\_commission-adult-formation/using-zoom](https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/information/diocesan-commissions/01_commission-adult-formation/using-zoom)

**WALK WITH ME ADVENT 2020 BOOKLETS:** Reflections on the Daily Readings from the First Sunday of Advent through to the Baptism of the Lord. Now available and individually wrapped for £ 1.00.

**RE – OPENING OF CHURCHES (PART 2):** The current lockdown comes to end and the and new tier system begins on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. This means that Mass can take place again for us from **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020** onwards. Booking for Masses from that date opens onwards starts from **28<sup>th</sup> November 2020**. The website will simply pick up where it left off and the existing schedule of Mass times will be carried on for the time being. We must of course continue to remember the need for Social distancing and that we still have a much reduced and limited capacity for public Mass. At the moment if all the people attending Church come as individuals that capacity will be set at **24 ONLY**. If a group of people living in the same house or ‘bubble’ wish to attend together, then the capacity may be increased up to a maximum of 48; but this will only apply when family groups of 6 come together. So at the moment we have 6 family pews (seating from 2 up to a maximum of 6) and six pews for individuals (with a maximum of 2 per pew).

We continue to operate the ‘One – Way’ System, whereby the Entrance will be via the main double doors from the car park and the Exit will be via the Fire Exit doors onto Foster Avenue. This will maintain the requirements of social distancing and prevention of potential “*pinch points*.” Another condition is the need to wear face coverings in Church.

The distribution of Holy Communion will take place at the end of Mass and not at the usual time. Once you have received Holy Communion you will be required to leave the Church immediately via the Exit doors onto Foster Avenue. The Guidance is explicit that Communion is to be given hand to hand only, with no dialogue and that social distancing is to be maintained with people moving within the space. I would emphasise at the point of Holy Communion that this is only a **necessary temporary emergency** measure and that, as soon as is possible, we will revert to our usual Canonical practice of offering people the choice of receiving Holy Communion either on the hand or on the tongue and at the usual time during Mass.

The Guidance seeks cooperation in the ‘Track and Trace’ system by keeping a record of those attending Church at any one time. With that in mind and, given that there will be a **limited number** of places available for the celebration of Mass, the Diocesan Booking System **MUST BE USED** if you wish to come to Mass at the Assumption. Details of how to book for Mass can be found on the Diocesan Website by following the link: <https://massbooking.uk/> where you will need to Sign Up in order to book for Mass. This is a pre – booking system and is the only way of regulating those who come to Church. The latest time to book for a Mass will be **TWO HOURS** before. Please book one pew for 2 or more people in the same household or “social bubble” (**Please now indicate the number of people coming when bookings a pew**). If you would like to book a pew and individual seats, please treat as 2 separate bookings. If you do not have access to, or are unable to use a computer you may book for Mass by telephone by calling Marie Calladine (Tel: 07850 978788), but I would ask that you only use this option if you unable to book online. For the time being Mass will be available on **Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays**, all at **10:00 am**.

Churches cannot currently pass round the collection plate, there is however, a collection basket adjacent to the exit door onto Foster Avenue. I know that many of you have already changed to Standing Order for Church Offerings and there is also a donation section on the Mass Booking website at the bottom of the booking page, allowing people to make a one – off or regular donation to the Parish via JustGiving, with or without Gift Aid. Please be aware that for Health & Safety and security reasons there is **NO ACCESS** through the Car Park from Devonshire Avenue / Cavendish Place; entrance to the Car Park is from **FOSTER AVENUE ONLY**. If you have any concerns or queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

The following items are important to remember:

**IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT LIMITATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS COULD YOU PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU ARRIVE IN GOOD TIME BEFORE MASS BEGINS SO THAT YOU CAN BE SHOWN TO YOUR PLACE. ALSO, IF YOU HAVE BOOKED FOR MASS BUT CANNOT ATTEND PLEASE LET US KNOW IN GOOD TIME.**

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO KEEP THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING TO TWO METRES ESPECIALLY IMMEDIATELY AFTER MASS CLOSE TO THE EXIT DOORS AND STEPS ONTO FOSTER AVENUE.**

**FACE COVERINGS ARE MANDATORY IN PLACES OF WORSHIP IN ENGLAND. ALL THOSE WHO ARE ATTENDING CHURCHES MUST WEAR A FACE COVERING UNLESS THEY ARE EXEMPT FROM DOING SO. THIS IS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL WHO GATHER IN THE CHURCH FOR MASS AS IT IS AN ENCLOSED PUBLIC SPACE WHERE THERE ARE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERING HOUSEHOLDS WHO THEY DO NOT NORMALLY MEET. PRIESTS IN THE SANCTUARY PROVIDING THEY ARE SUFFICIENTLY DISTANT (2M OR MORE) FROM THE CONGREGATION DO NOT NEED TO WEAR A FACE COVERING EXCEPT WHEN DISTRIBUTING HOLY COMMUNION. FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE SEE: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk>**

**IN ENGLAND, IF YOU ARE OVER THE AGE OF 11 YOU MUST WEAR A FACE COVERING IN ANY PLACES OF WORSHIP. ANY PREMISES WHERE FACE COVERINGS ARE REQUIRED ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE REASONABLE STEPS TO PROMOTE COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW. THERE ARE SOME CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE PEOPLE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO WEAR A FACE COVERING. FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE SEE: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>**

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT YOU WILL NOT JUST BE ABLE TO TURN UP AND ATTEND MASS.**

**For the time being and until further notice  
SUNDAY OBLIGATION REMAINS SUSPENDED.**

**ST. ELISABETH CONVENT, BELARUS:** The joyous Christmas season is approaching! The season that is filled with love, family and, most importantly, God. As you may be aware, Sisters from the St Elisabeth Convent (Minsk, Belarus) are unable to participate in annual Christmas markets in our region due to travel restrictions. Nevertheless they have found a great way to spread the Christmas joy, love and deeds of mercy. They are launching the very first on – line Christmas Market this year, so that people from all over the world can purchase Christmas presents and souvenirs made with love and continuous prayer. Please, click here to participate: <https://catalog.obitel-minsk.com/christmas-market> **Through purchasing beautiful Christmas gifts each one of us will be able to serve the poor, sick, homeless and lonely people.** Because every item purchased at the on – line Market is a donation towards one of the Convent’s ministries. The on – line Christmas Market of St Elisabeth Convent offers a range of unique handmade items that will make memorable Christmas gifts, including: traditional hand painted Christmas ornaments; wooden toys and souvenirs; Santa Claus and Father Frost figures; handcrafted Christmas tree baubles; Nativity scenes and sets; Christmas themed ceramics and glass products; Orthodox Nativity icons; Russian matryoshka dolls and much more. Sisters are sending their prayers and blessings from Minsk. Throughout the pandemic and shutdowns, the Sisters were able to continue running and supporting their multiple social ministries that care for the vulnerable and sick near their Convent. Their biggest inspiration has been Saint Elisabeth (Elisabeth Fyodorovna see: <https://orthochristian.com/116358.html>) who helped the sick and the needy during her lifetime. Please remember that you are always more than welcome at our Convent. With love in Christ, Sister Olga, ST ELISABETH CONVENT 220053 Vigotskogo 6, Minsk, Belarus, phone/fax: +375173353089 [elisabeth.convent@gmail.com](mailto:elisabeth.convent@gmail.com) [obitel-minsk.ru/en/](http://obitel-minsk.ru/en/)

**SCHOOL GOVERNORS:** Parents of pupils at English Martyrs’ School will have received a nomination form in readiness for election of two **Parent Governors** in December, ready for the New Year meeting. Additionally if you are not a parent but you are interested in becoming a **School Foundation Governor** (you will need to be a practising Catholic for this category) then please contact me (07827 854773) for further details or to ask any questions – **David Boott** (Chairman of Governors)

**VOCATIONS CAFÉ:** The Diocesan Vocations Team are holding a Zoom Café for men and women on Tuesday **1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 at 7:00 pm**. If you would like to meet the team, ask any questions or simply just listen in, e – mail Diane at: [vocationsadmin@dioceseofnottingham.uk](mailto:vocationsadmin@dioceseofnottingham.uk) for the link and password to enable you to join them on your device with your drink and cake. Find out what it means!!!

**ADVENT LITURGY:** During these different times it is more important than ever that we join as a community to share faith and love. Our Year 7 Chaplaincy Team here at The Trinity Catholic School are leading us in a livestreamed Advent Liturgy on **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 at 7:00 pm** to try and help us start the Advent season together and would love it if you could join us. The Liturgy will be streamed on the Be Inspirational YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/beinspirational>) for all to watch and is a wonderful opportunity to both support these students and to spend some time as a family in prayer. We hope to see you there!

**FREE E-BOOK:** (with Church imprimatur) for your computer/tablet/phone; **Son of God: The Daily Gospel Year B**. The new Liturgical Year begins on the First Sunday of Advent. This e-book may be downloaded **free of charge** to any computer/ tablet/ phone. It offers the Gospel for every day of the coming Liturgical Year B (Sundays Year B & Weekdays Year I), followed by a reflection of some 750 words on each daily Gospel. The e-book may be passed on for downloading to friends or acquaintances as desired. It carries the Imprimatur of Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney, given when he was Bishop of Parramatta. **Son of God: The Daily Gospel Year B-1** may be accessed at the following URL address: [www.catholic-thoughts.info/ebook/](http://www.catholic-thoughts.info/ebook/)

**THE CANAAN TRUST:** We have received a letter of appreciation and gratitude from the Canaan Trust for the various kind donation of food which they have received from the Parish. “*Since the onset of the Pandemic the Trust has experienced an over 100% (year on year) increase in calls for help and support. So many individuals and families have been tipped over the edge by the negative impact of the Pandemic. The Trust recognises that it is only truly able to proactively respond to this increased need because of the generous support of good people such as you all. Thank You for caring and God Bless you all.*” – **Kevin Curtis: Project Manager.**

**MARY’S MEALS, “DOUBLE THE LOVE” CAMPAIGN:** “So much can be asked of us at this time of year. It may be hard to always say yes. Mary said yes to being the Mother of Jesus and as a young, unmarried girl this must have been a terrifying moment for her. Yet her “yes” brought Jesus into the world and changed lives forever. Throughout this year of many challenges, thanks to our generous supporters, Mary’s Meals has continued to say yes to feeding desperately hungry children with a daily meal in a place of education. Now we are delighted to share with you a new opportunity to say yes and provide 43, 000 hungry children in Bong County, Liberia, with a life – changing meal at school. From **2<sup>nd</sup> November until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021**, donations made to our Double The Love campaign will be matched by the UK government, up to £ 2 million. Please consider setting a place at our [Big Family Christmas dinner table](#) or buying a Christmas gift card on our website. More information on how to support us can be found at: [www.marysmeals.org.uk/doublethelove](http://www.marysmeals.org.uk/doublethelove) Thank you.”

**OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC MULTI – ACADEMY TRUST SITUATIONS VACANT:** Please be aware that OLOLCMAT has the following new vacancies at the following Schools within the OLOL CMAT: The Trinity Catholic School – Temporary Teacher of Science; Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy – Part – time Administrative Assistant; Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy – Receptionist; Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy – 2 Learning Support Assistant roles; Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy – Cover Supervisor; St Patrick’s Catholic Voluntary Academy, Mansfield – Classroom teacher – Maternity Cover; St Philip Neri with St Bede Catholic Voluntary Academy – Midday Supervisor and; St Joseph’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School, Langwith Junction – Year 1 Classroom Teacher (Maternity Cover). The link for the vacancies is: <https://www.ololcatholicmat.co.uk/vacancies-and-recruitment/>.

### ***The First Sunday of Advent***

On this First Sunday of Advent, as in every year, the Church invites us to consider the Second Coming of Christ. In Greek the *parousia*. *Parousia* means presence. It is usually translated as the Second Coming or the Second *Adventus* in Latin. And we are familiar with the message, we hear it every year, “Stay Awake!” But this year, the Year of Mark, Jesus gives a little Parable to illustrate what He means. And if we read that Parable with First Century eyes, rather than Twenty – First Century eyes, then it can come to life.

Our Lord ask us to picture a man going on a journey (but not into the *Twilight Zone* – for those of you old enough to remember that TV programme). Now when we go on a journey today what do we tend to do? We might take out our Smart Phone and look up Google Maps or, the equivalent, to direct us. And before we even start out we know exactly how long it is going to take to get to our destination. Not so of course in the First Century AD. To go on a journey in those days was really to take a leap into the dark. It was almost impossible to predict how long that journey would take. Especially as the weather could affect things so much (see The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 27). Sometimes journeys, could be delayed by several months. So in the little Parable where Jesus talks about the man going on a journey, His audience at the time would have known that there was no way of predicting exactly when he would have come back.

So the man makes plans for while he is away. He gives each servant his own job to do. And those servants can obviously be seen to represent us. We all have our own particular service to do in the Church, as St Paul reminds us in his letters. And then the master has a particular role for the doorkeeper – he must Stay Awake! Why especially the doorkeeper? Well, the doorkeeper has to be alert to make sure that no undesirables get into the house and wreak havoc. But also of course, it would be the doorkeeper who would be the first person to see the master returning from the journey. So he in particular needs to be on the lookout; just like the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son – he was constantly on the lookout for the return of his son.

But then in the Gospel Jesus broadens out the command. At the end He says that everyone must Stay Awake! And He mentions four different times when the Master of the house might return: Evening, Midnight, Cockcrow and Dawn. Interestingly, these four different times form the backdrop to the Passion Narrative in Mark's Gospel. In the evening Jesus gathers the twelve and predicts that one of them will betray Him. At midnight, Peter, James and John are in the Garden of Gethsemane and they see Jesus troubled to the point of death and He asks them to Stay Awake! And of course they do not. Then at cockcrow, we know that is when Peter denies Our Lord. Finally, at dawn, that is when the Sanhedrin hand Jesus over to Pontius Pilate and Pilate passes the death sentence. Four moments in the Passion: Evening, Midnight, Cockcrow and Dawn; they are moments of betrayal, weakness, lethargy, denial, injustice and condemnation. These are the things which make it so hard for us to do what Our Lord commands. These are the things which prevent us from Staying Awake! – Ready for the glorious return of Our Lord.

Evening, Midnight, Cockcrow and Dawn; there is something unusual about those times. You would not expect a traveller to arrive at their destination in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow or at dawn, especially not in the First Century AD. Travel was dangerous – think of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. If you were on a journey back then you would do your best to travel and arrive during the daylight hours – not in the dark of the evening, certainly not at midnight or the early hours of the morning and, not soon after dawn, as that would have meant that you had been travelling through the night. So when Jesus mentions those four night times, is He actually hinting that the *parousia* will be unexpected? He does say that the Master will arrive suddenly. But in any case the command is clear, Stay Awake!

One of the things we notice about Jesus in the Gospels is that when He preaches He uses examples that would have been familiar to the people of the time. He uses examples, images and illustrations that were right under their noses. A lamp in the house, salt, a tree in its root, weeds among wheat, yeast, a coin, patches on clothes, workers in the market place, a house built on sand or rock. And He does that in this week's Gospel of course and He uses an image that could not be more familiar or ordinary. A man going on a journey.

If we are to reflect on the message of today's Gospel, to Stay Awake! is there an example that we can take from our everyday lives which might illustrate what that calls for? Well, maybe we could think about a journey by train, from a large railway station like Euston or King's Cross. You stand on the concourse and look up at bank of electronic departure boards high up on a wall. And the departure boards often keep you guessing about exactly when the train will be ready and from which platform it will leave. When the train is about to depart the word, "Preparing" comes up on the board and that is when people begin to pick up their bags and gather their family and belongings together, ready to board the train. Everyone is on high alert, still staring at the departure boards. Everyone is waiting for that moment when the platform number will be revealed. And when that happens there is a mad dash. People from all parts of the station converge on the platform; some people even run.

That is an example from everyday life of so many people being wide awake and on high alert. Exactly what Our Lord calls for today. But why do we need to be wide awake and on high alert at the *parousia*? Well, we know the answer – because that is when everything will be laid bare. And what will count then? What will matter then? Only this – how we have lived and how we have loved. Get ready for that Jesus says today. Do not fall asleep at the wheel. Do not let the troubles of this world and the sufferings of these dark days get you down. Stay Awake and full of hope; what matters is how we live and how we love.

How are we living? Lockdown makes many of us feel hemmed in. Are we hemmed in right now? Perhaps by some destructive behaviours? Do we need to break free of them? Stay Awake! How are we loving? Can we reach out perhaps and build a bridge this Advent; even if it is the last thing that somebody else deserves? When we post on social media, when we watch things on the internet are we respecting ourselves and others? Do we need to make changes there? To Stay Awake!

Of course this is not something we have to do under our own steam. Ours is not a, 'do – it – yourself' religion. God is in the driving seat. Our role is to work with His Grace, to make the changes we need to make in our lives and Stay Awake! The departure boards at the railway stations keep the travellers guessing about the timings of their trains' departure. Well, God keeps us guessing about the timing of the Son's arrival. And we may ask ourselves this: If the *parousia* were to happen tonight – in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow or as the day dawns tomorrow – would I be awake? How ready would I be?