

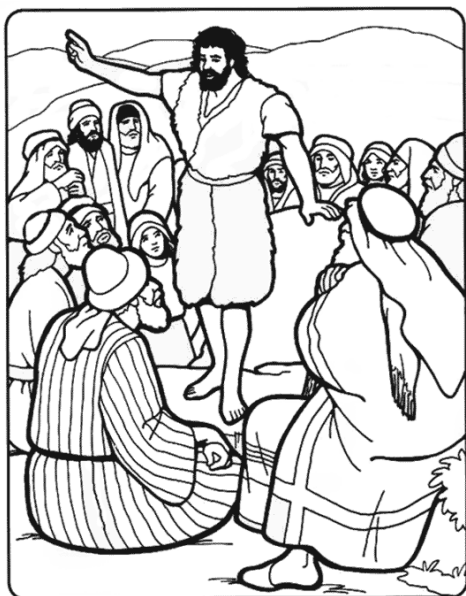
St Joseph's, Bedford & Our Lady's, Kempston

Parish Priest: Canon Seamus Keenan. Assistant Priest: Fr Liam Castle.

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 15th December 2024



PENITENTIAL SERVICE

There will be a Penitential Service with individual Confessions this Wednesday 18th December at 7.00pm in St Joseph's. It is a good way to prepare for the feast of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS CARD SALE

Last Sunday for the Christmas card sale and other religious items at the back of the church in both churches. There are still some 2025 diaries left for sale. Profits from the sale in aid of our parish project, Mary's Meals.

CHRISTMAS DRAW

Tickets for the Christmas Draw are still on sale today after Mass at £2.50 a book. The draw will take place after the 6.30pm Mass next Sunday so please hand tickets and money in before then. **Prizes needed, please**, for the draw which can be left at the presbytery or in Our Lady's church. Thanks to all who have donated prizes.

Mass Times – St Joseph's, Bedford

Sunday	8.15am	Anson Sabichan
	9.30am	Canon Seamus Keenan
	11.00am	Michael & Paolo Micallef, RIP
	6.30pm	Angela & Bill Letch

Monday *Feria*

10.45am	Celia Goodstadt, RIP
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Tuesday *O Wisdom*

10.45am	Maureen McCormack, RIP
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Wednesday *O Adonai*

10.45am	Sylvia Blackburn, RIP
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Thursday *O Root of Jesse*

10.45am	Mr & Mrs DiGennaro, RIP
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Friday *O Key of David*

10.45am	Daniel Reddy, RIP
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Saturday *O Rising Sun*

10.45am	Dennis Gilbert, RIP
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Mass Times – Our Lady's, Kempston

Saturday	6.00pm	Phil Hufton, RIP
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Confessions – St Joseph's:

Saturday 11.30am – 12.30pm (Exposition)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Shout aloud and sing praise, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

ROSARY: Daily at 10.20am

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION: Thursday 11.30am-7.00pm

CLEANING: S Masih, T Ndoro

FLOWERS: No flowers

NEXT SUNDAY: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Readers & Ministers: Rota Week 2

Children's Liturgy: Bimla & Natalie Mathews

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Our annual parish Christmas Concert will be this Friday 20th December starting at 7.30pm in the Guild Room (access from Church Street). Lots of entertaining talent will be performing in aid of our parish project. Tickets on sale at £5 per person today after all Masses and on the door. Light refreshments available.

DIOCESAN DIRECTORY 2025

The new Diocesan Directory for 2025 is now on sale at the back of the church at £4 per copy. Please place money in the wall box marked 'Books'.

FLOWER COLLECTION

There is a second collection at all Masses today in St Joseph's to purchase flowers for the church at Christmas.

CATHOLIC HERALD

The December edition of the Catholic Herald is on sale in the porch of St Joseph's at £5 per copy. Please place money in the wall box marked 'Papers'.

GIVING TREE

Thanks to all who donated gifts on the Giving Tree. These will be distributed to those the SVP will visit over the Christmas period.

CHRISTMAS POSTERS

The Knights of St Columba have produced Christmas posters which you can display in your window, free from the back of the church.

RED BOX APPEAL

End-of-year appeal for all Missio Red Boxes to be returned to St Joseph's and Our Lady's, please, before Friday 20th December.

CAROL SERVICE

We are invited to a Carol Service in SS Philip & James Church, Severn Way, Bedford, on Thursday 19th December from 7pm until 8pm followed by refreshments. St Thomas More School Choir along with students and staff will be leading the Service.

REQUIESCANT IN PACE

Please pray for the souls of Mary O'Connor, Daisy McCann and Vincent Arthur. May they rest forever in the peace of the Lord.

REFLECTION

This Gaudete Sunday calls us to rejoice because the joyful feast of Christmas is almost upon us. Gaudete means 'rejoice'. Indeed, I would say it is an obligation to rejoice because "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). Therein is the secret of this joy; it is the joy of the Lord. It is nothing we can conjure, it does not come from ourselves, it is the gift of God. Yes, we can experience joy in different ways but it does not last. As soon as circumstances change it disappears; it is not an abiding joy. It is this abiding joy that God wants for us which remains even in the sad days of life. It is also there even when we don't feel particularly joyful. It is that deep-flowing stream which keeps us buoyant, especially during difficult times and dark days. A silent undercurrent that gives us hope and strength to keep going and not lose heart. We

cannot explain it but we know it is there and will unexpectedly surface when needed and without our bidding; surprised by joy! A little reminder that the Lord is with us, even in trying times. It is a gift we need to pray for, asking the Lord to share a little of his joy with us to sustain us and give us hope. *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice! Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 4:4-7). So continue to seek this gift in prayer along with an eternal perspective which helps in putting things in proportion. Focus on God and he will grant us this grace. In the words of Blessed Carlo Acutis, *"Sadness is the gaze turned towards oneself. Happiness is the gaze turned towards God."* Another saint once said, *"God preserve us from miserable saints."* (St Teresa of Avila). To be a saint and to be miserable is a contradiction. Saints are joy-filled souls because their centre, their focus is God, the source of all joy: *"Well done good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your master"* (Mt. 25:23). Notice how Jesus says that you will enter into joy, not that joy will enter into us but rather that we will enter or plunge into the vast ocean of joy which is God himself! Until that wonderful day, we can ask him for a taste of this grace that awaits in all its fullness so that in all circumstances we may know he is near, giving comfort, secure in his love. As I write this piece I am sitting in front of a display of beautiful Christmas decorations in my sister's home with two words written large; Noel and Joy. Noel comes from an old French word which is a variation of the Latin word 'natalis', meaning birth. It is the birth of a special child who gives joy to the world. He, 'the hope of the nations', is the one who disperses the gloom of a dark world and brings in the light of hope. Hope gives birth to joy and nothing will take it from us (Jn.16:22). The joy of the Lord is your strength. Remain strong, therefore, in the Lord, trust him and have the courage to rejoice!

LAST WEEK'S COLLECTIONS

Offertory

St Joseph's £1475.73

Our Lady's £507.73

Thank you