

The Pope calls on world leaders to cancel debt of poorer nations

Addressing a crowded St Peter's Square, Pope Francis once again emphasized his firm "no" to war, declaring that it "always destroys."

He also urged that no country or people should be "crushed by debt."



Debt cancellation for poorer nations
Speaking after his traditional New Year's Day Ange-

lus, he made an appeal to world leaders "God is the first to forgive debts, as we always ask in the 'Our Father,'" Pope Francis said. "The Jubilee calls us to translate this forgiveness into social terms so that no individual, family, or people is crushed by debt. I encourage leaders of nations with Christian traditions to set an example by canceling or significantly reducing the debts of the poorest countries."

Gratitude to peacemakers

The Pope went on to extend his heartfelt thanks to all those who, in conflict-ridden areas across the globe, are working diplomatically to promote justice and peace.

"I express my deep gratitude", he said, "to everyone who, in the many regions plagued by conflict, work toward dialogue and negotiations. Let us pray for an end to all fighting and for a decisive focus on peace and reconciliation. My thoughts go to war-torn Ukraine, Gaza, Israel, Myanmar, [North] Kivu, and so many other people in conflict."

The destructive reality of war

The Pope referenced the Italian television program *A Sua Immagine*, where, he said, he had seen footage and photographs depicting the devastation caused by war.

"Brothers and sisters," he said, "war destroys. It always destroys! War is always a defeat. Always. I express my heartfelt appreciation to all those striving for peace."

Greeting to Italian President

The Pope extended his best wishes to Italian President Sergio Mattarella, expressing hope for "every good thing in the new year" and assuring him of his prayers. In his New Year's address to the nation the previous evening, Mattarella echoed the Pope's message, noting the significance of the 58th World Day of Peace and its call to the conscience of all.

"All—Heads of State and Government, leaders of international organizations, civil and religious authorities—are called to address the wounds of the world, the troubling social and economic fragmentation, and the growing threats to peaceful development among nations," Mattarella said.

He affirmed that, on behalf of the Italian people, he takes up Pope Francis's continuous appeals for urgent and courageous actions to secure peace and address challenges such as migration, environmental degradation, and the risks and opportunities posed by new technologies.

Source: Vaticannews.va

A King To Behold

An "epiphany" is an appearance. In today's readings, with their rising stars, splendorous lights, and mysteries revealed, the face of the child born on Christmas day appears.

Herod, in today's Gospel, asks the chief priests and scribes where the Messiah is to be born. The answer Matthew puts on their lips says much more, combining two strands of Old Testament promise—one revealing the Messiah to be from the line of David (see 2 Samuel 2:5), the other predicting "a ruler of Israel" who will "shepherd his flock" and whose "greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth" (see Micah 5:1-3).

Those promises of Israel's king ruling the nations resound also in today's Psalm. The psalm celebrates David's son, Solomon. His kingdom, we sing, will stretch "to the ends of



the earth," and the world's kings will pay him homage. That's the scene too in today's First Reading, as nations stream from the East, bearing "gold and frankincense" for Israel's king.

The Magi's pilgrimage in today's Gospel marks the fulfillment of God's promises. The Magi, probably Persian astrologers, are following the star that Balaam predicted would rise along with the ruler's staff over the house of Jacob (see Numbers 24:17).

Laden with gold and spices, their journey evokes those made to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba and the "kings of the earth" (see 1 Kings 10:2, 25; 2 Chronicles 9:24). Interestingly, the only other places where frankincense and myrrh are mentioned together are in songs about Solomon (see Song of Songs 3:6; 4:6, 14).

One greater than Solomon is here (see Luke 11:31). He has come to reveal that all peoples are "coheirs" of the royal family of Israel, as today's Epistle teaches.

His manifestation forces us to choose: will we follow the signs that lead to Him as the wise Magi did? Or will we be like those priests and scribes who let God's words of promise become dead letters on an ancient page?

Scott Hann



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
Pastoral Area

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EPIPHANY OF THE LORD YEAR C

Entrance Antiphon . MI 3:1; 1 Ch 29:12

Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come; and kingship is in his grasp, and power and dominion.

First Reading: Prophet Isaiah 60:1-6

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 72

All the nations on earth shall fall prostrate before you, O Lord.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Gospel Acclamation: Mt 2:2

Alleluia, alleluia!!

We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship the Lord.

Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Communion Antiphon: Mt 2:2

We have seen his star in the East, and have come with gifts to adore the Lord.

SATURDAY 4th January

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Tess Dauke RIP (R. Frearson)

4:30 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Judith Montford ... Thanksgiving

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Janina Krokowska RIP (J. Lazarus)

SUNDAY 5th January ... Epiphany of the Lord

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Judith Montford...Thanksgiving

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford ... Clive Bosley RIP (Gay Bosley)

MONDAY 6th January ... NO MASS (ENGLISH MARTYRS D IDCOT CLOSED FOR RENOVATION)

TUESDAY 7th January ... NO MASS

4pm Reception of the body of Phillis Green St John Wallingford

WEDNESDAY 8th January ... NO MASS (ENGLISH MARTYRS D IDCOT CLOSED FOR RENOVATION)

THURSDAY 9th January ... NO MASS

FRIDAY 10th January

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

SATURDAY 11th January

9:30 am **NO MASS** ... English Martyrs Didcot

4:30 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

SUNDAY 12th January ... The Baptism of the Lord

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford

In your prayers, please remember: Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, David Woodley, Ann Furlong and all the sick and housebound of our churches.



DEATH/FUNERAL NOTICE

Phyllis Green RIP ... Requiem Mass at 10:30am, 8th January, Wallingford



Children's Liturgy Class to resume on 12th January

The first Children's Liturgy Class of 2025 will start during the Sunday Mass on 12th January. Jacqui, Gay and their team are looking forward to welcoming our children back on the 12th. Thank you.

Repair Works at English Martyrs Church

Please be informed that some inspection and repair works would be carried out at the interior of English Martyrs Didcot from 6th to 8th January. For safety reasons, there will be no activities in the church area of English Martyrs Didcot during this period of time, including weekday masses, worships and prayers. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused.

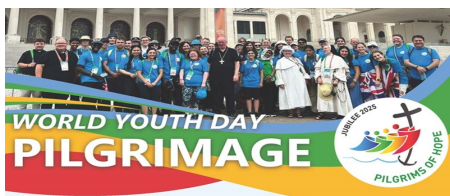
New Sunday Missals for Sale

If you want to get a copy of the New Sunday Missals, you can do so now. It costs £23 per copy, payable by cash or contactless (with our Dona device) at English Martyrs Didcot and St John's Wallingford. You can buy your Sunday Missals from the Parish Office during office hours (Tuesday to Friday 9:00am-1:00pm). Thank you.



Join World Youth Day Pilgrimage July 2025

Bishop Philip Egan is inviting all young people in the diocese to join him in the World Youth Day pilgrimage to Rome next summer. You will be going there for the Youth Jubilee, from 28th July to 4th August. During that week, there will be thousands of young people in Rome at the invitation of the Holy Father. You will also be there for the Mass and ceremony at which Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, Patron of our Youth, will be canonised. The cost includes flights, hotel accommodation, half board, travel in Rome, entrance and participation fees and more. It should be really good! For more information and pre-booking, contact youth@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk. Hope you can join us! For more information, please refer to the poster on our noticeboard or visit the parish website. Thank you.



Missing of Sunday Missal for Bible Reading Group

We regret to let you know that the Sunday Missal for the Bible Reading Group has gone missing. This has created a lot of inconvenience to our readers. Please keep an eye out for the missing Sunday Missal, which used to be kept on the table at the foyer with a sign to indicate that it is for Bible Readers use ONLY. If you have taken it home by mistake, please can you return it to the church as soon as possible? Thank you.

Prayer for Our Pastoral Area

O LORD, graciously look down upon us
your servants and upon our work to build
Your Holy Church here in this place.

Enlighten our minds and lead us into all
truth as we seek to do Your will.

Abundantly bless our labours that Your
Holy Church may serve You ever more
faithfully to the glory of Your Holy name.

Through Christ our Lord, Amen.



Thames ISIS
Catholic Pastoral Area

Pilgrims of Hope: Join Simon for Local Pilgrimage

You will recall Simon Marshall had organised a walk campaign during summer of last year. Following on the Jubilee Year and the designation of four Churches in our diocese for pilgrimages — St. John's Cathedral in Portsmouth, St. James's Reading, Sacred Heart Bournemouth, St. Edmund's Southampton, St. Thomas's in St. Helier, Jersey and St. Joseph's in St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Simon has volunteered to organise visits for our parishioners to these churches. Check our newsletters and websites for upcoming information about registration and dates. The Church provides Catholics with the opportunity to gain indulgences by making pilgrimages, prayerful visits to specific churches, or by practicing works of mercy during the holy year. A plenary indulgence is a grace granted by the Catholic Church through the merits of Jesus Christ to remove the temporal punishment due to sin.



A plenary indulgence cleanses the soul as if the person had just been baptized. The indulgence applies to sins already forgiven. Plenary indulgences obtained during the Jubilee Year can also be applied to souls in purgatory with the possibility of obtaining two plenary indulgences for the deceased in one day, according to the Apostolic Penitentiary. To obtain an indulgence, the usual conditions of detachment from all sin, sacramental confession, holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the pope must be met.

Opening of Holy Doors

On Christmas Day, Pope Francis delivered his Urbi et Orbi message to the people of the city of Rome and the world from the central loggia of St. Peter's Basilica at noon.

On 26 December, for the first time in the Jubilee tradition, Pope Francis opened a fifth sacred portal in a Roman prison, a gesture of hope that shows his ongoing closeness to detainees.

On Sunday, 29 December, the Pope opened the Holy Door of his cathedral, Saint John Lateran, which on 9 November last year celebrated the 1700th anniversary of its dedication.

Then, on 1 January 2025, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major was opened.

Lastly, this Sunday, 5 January 2025, will mark the opening of the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls.

These last three Holy Doors will be closed on Sunday, 28 December 2025.
Source: Vatican News

The significance of the Holy Door

The Holy Door is deemed 'Holy' since it calls all those who enter through it to walk in holiness of life. In the footsteps of the Pope, during the singing of the Jubilee hymn, representatives of the entire People of God crossed its threshold, as a prelude to the countless pilgrims of hope from every country and language who will visit St. Peter's Basilica and celebrate the mysteries of salvation during the Holy Year.

The origin of the custom goes back to Pope Martin V who, for the Extraordinary Jubilee of 1423, opened a Holy Door to enter the Lateran Basilica. In St. Peter's, it was first used for the Jubilee of 1450.

Its location, the rear wall of the chapel dedicated by Pope John VII to the Mother of God, corresponds to a place where it is found today. Pope Alexander VI, in 1500, endowed this symbol of the opening of the Jubilee with a ritual that remained virtually unchanged over the centuries, until the turn of the millennium, when in the year 2000, the removal of the former brick wall was replaced by the ceremonial opening of the bronze Door already in 1983.

The last opening of the Holy Door for an Ordinary Jubilee was when Pope St. John Paul II had done so in the Year 2000. Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in 2015 for his 2016 Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.



Seniors' Lunch Volunteer Recruitment

We are looking for volunteers to help in the cooking and serving of our senior lunches, which is held once a month on a Thursday. If you are interested in cooking or serving hot meals to our senior parishioners, as well as creating a cosy atmosphere for our once-a-month gathering, please come forward to volunteer and contact Ada at the Parish Office to register your interest. Nothing is more rewarding than to share and care for our lovely parishioners. Thank you.

Dona — Contactless for Offerings and Repository Purchases

Our contactless paying devices — Dona at both English Martyrs and St John have been set up for you to make general offerings, Christmas or Easter offerings, purchase of repositories or the New Sunday Missals now. Please feel free to make use of the devices when you make purchases or offering any time when the church is open. You can opt to gift-aid your offerings at the device. You may also leave us a message at the end of your payment. You may contact the Parish Office if you have any questions. Please note that purchases cannot be gift-aided. Thank you.

