

Father Hugh writes:

This week we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, which concludes Christmastide, so that as we hear the beginning of Jesus' public ministry tomorrow we begin the weeks in ordinary time. St Mark gives us a dramatic account of the event, he talks to us about the heavens being torn open and the drama of a voice from Heaven. This is no ordinary event and tells us something of who Jesus is. This drama is completed by the Centurion at the foot of the cross, whom you will recall says, Truly, this was the Son of God.

These take us to Ash Wednesday on February 17th initially and then of course continuing after Pentecost.

That's looking ahead; but for now:

We are in another lockdown with no end date this time given to us. I would add an err of caution this week for you all as to whether you should come to Mass. I obviously don't want to stop anyone, but this variant to the virus is causing alarm amongst our health teams who continue to do a brilliant job. Our Government urges us to stay at home and particularly in these cold weeks I'd encourage that and thus protect yourselves as best we can and each other.

I think many of us think that the government is very optimistic in hoping to have so many vaccinations completed by the middle of February and it is a good thing to be optimistic. One of our weather forecasters was able to tell us last weekend that the day length had increased by 10minutes since the winter solstice so it might be 15 by now!

We know that Spring will come in a matter of weeks, but January always seems a long month. Actually we are already into the second week. However, the reason for a 3rd lockdown are clear to see. This time Churches, Synagogues, Mosques etc. may remain open for prayer, but we must all remain cautious and vigilant to the virus.

Please do remember to speed on your way after Mass and not to hang around to chat, especially in the narthex. If you can, please use the QR code at the entrance to our church. Masks and sanitiser have become the norm, but as always for all church use, we must be careful.

If you are not comfortable coming to Mass that's ok too, there is still no obligation. There are many other churches that have Masses that are streamed that you may join online, and ours too are on the facebook page. I hope this is not too alarmist, but we should all be careful.

It's muddy on the footpaths but we still have lovely walks around us to enjoy, the views of the Downs always lift my spirits.

We must continue to pray for the people of the United States at this time as the inauguration of a new President takes place on the 20th. In many ways this past presidency, now concluding, has been a disaster for the world and the President elect has a huge task ahead to try and find unity again. It is encouraging to see that he intends to reunite the country with the Paris climate agreement.

Next Sunday is Peace Sunday and a day, as well as perhaps during this week, we could focus our prayer for peace and harmony in our world. There's an optional Memoria this Tuesday of St Aelred of Rievaulx

Walking around the village, it's always good to see what's happening in people's front gardens. I spied the first snowdrops last week and there are a few signs on Pinchnose Green too. I noticed that a couple of witch hazels are showing colour too and that the early dwarf iris are pushing through. Seed potatoes were in the Southdown garden centre the other day, the beginnings of a new growing season.

