

Archbishop's statement ahead of the House of Lord's votes on abortion decriminalisation and 'pills-by-post'

Archbishop John Sherrington, the Lead

Archbishop John Sherrington, the Lead Bishop for Life Issues for the Bishops' Conference, has issued a statement as peers prepare to vote on the Crime and Policing Bill on Wednesday, 18 March. The voting in the House of Lords could lead to the decriminalisation of abortion for women, for any reason, up to the point of birth.



Archbishop Sherrington also wants so-called 'pills-by-post' abolished and is asking peers to vote in favour of Baroness Stroud's amendment to reinstate mandatory in-person medical consultations under such circumstances.

Statement

"As we approach these votes in the House of Lords, I urge Peers to support Baroness Monckton's amendment to remove clause 208 from the Crime and Policing Bill the implementation of which would decriminalise abortion for women, for any reason, up to the point of birth. If not removed, this clause would represent a radical departure from our current law, further threatening the dignity of the unborn child. The clause is not supported by the British public.

"Apart from the further threat clause 208 poses to the lives of unborn babies and the health of their mothers, this change would leave women more susceptible to coercion and abuse.

"I also ask peers to vote in favour of Baroness Stroud's amendment to reinstate mandatory in-person medical consultations and thereby to abolish so-called 'pills-by-post' to which we have been opposed since its introduction. As well as leading to an increase in abortions in general, pills-by-post has led to a number of late-term, at-home abortions, which have also put the health of the mother in serious danger.

"Peers can be contacted through a [Right to Life UK e-action](#).

"Please also join me in prayer to pray for our legislators and for a healthcare system that respects the dignity of both mother and baby.

"We acknowledge the efforts of many Peers who relentlessly fight toward attaining this goal, as well as the many individuals and organisations that offer real and compassionate support to pregnant women in difficulty.

"St Joseph, protector of pregnant women and the unborn, pray for us."

Archbishop John Sherrington

Lead Bishop for Life Issues

Archbishop of Liverpool

Source: [Archbishop's statement ahead of the House of Lord's votes on abortion decriminalisation and 'pills-by-post' - Catholic Bishops' Conference](#)

At Lazarus's Tomb



As we draw near to the end of Lent, today's Gospel clearly has Jesus' passion and death in view.

That's why John gives us the detail about Lazarus' sister, Mary—that she is the one who anointed the Lord for burial (see John 12:3, 7). His disciples warn against returning to Judea; Thomas even predicts they will "die with Him" if they go back.

When Lazarus is raised, John notices the tombstone being taken away, as well as Lazarus' burial cloths and head covering—all details he later notices with Jesus' empty tomb (see John 20:1, 6, 7).

Like the blind man in last week's readings, Lazarus represents all humanity. He stands for "dead men"—for all those Jesus loves and wants to liberate from the bands of sin and death.

John even recalls the blind man in his account today (see John 11:37). Like the man's birth in blindness, Lazarus' death is used by Jesus to reveal "the glory of God" (see John 9:3). And again like last week, Jesus' words and deeds give sight to those who believe (see John 11:40).

If we believe, we will see—that Jesus loves each of us as He loved Lazarus, that He calls us out of death and into new life.

By His Resurrection Jesus has fulfilled Ezekiel's promise in today's First Reading. He has opened the graves that we may rise, put His Spirit in us that we may live. This is the Spirit that Paul writes of in today's Epistle. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will give life to we who were once dead in sin.

Faith is the key. If we believe as Martha does in today's Gospel—that Jesus is the resurrection and the life—even if we die, we will live.

"I have promised and I will do it," the Father assures us in the First Reading. We must trust in His word, as we sing in today's Psalm—that with Him is forgiveness and salvation.

Scott Hahn



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
Pastoral Area

PARISHES OF
THE ENGLISH MARTYRS, Didcot
ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, Wallingford

www.didcotandwallingfordcatholicchurches.org
Office email: didcot@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

(Office Hours Tuesday–Friday 9am to 2pm) Telephone: 01235812338
15 Manor Crescent, Didcot OX11 7AJ

Fr Dominic Adeiza's email: dadeiza@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk
Safeguarding email: safeguarding.didwal@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk
SVP contact: 07516 701917



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR A — WEEK 5

Entrance Antiphon:

Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:12-14

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 130

With the LORD there is mercy, in him is plentiful redemption.

Second Reading: Romans 8:8-11

Gospel Acclamation:

Glorify to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord. Everyone who believes in me shall never die.

Glorify to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

Gospel: John 11:1-45

Communion Antiphon: Jn 11:26

Everyone who lives and believes in me will not die for ever, says the Lord.

SATURDAY 21st March

9:30 am **NO MASS**

4:30 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Patt & Chris Watts RIP

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Daniel Pagnillo RIP (Rosemary)

SUNDAY 22nd March ... FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Joanne Benzair RIP

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford ... Elizabeth Trainer RIP

MONDAY 23rd March ... NO MASS

TUESDAY 24th March

6:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Tess Dauke RIP

11:30 am Stations of the Cross St John Wallingford

12:00 noon Mass St John Wallingford ... Leanne Rudkin RIP (Helen & Paul)

7:00 pm Pastoral Area Confession ... English Martyrs Didcot

WEDNESDAY 25th March ... THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

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

THURSDAY 26th March

6:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

9:30 am Mass St John Wallingford ... Patricia RIP (Joan Walker)

FRIDAY 27th March

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Christopher Wilson RIP (B Wilson)

11:30 am Requiem Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Ellen Bailey RIP

6:00 pm Stations of the Cross English Martyrs Didcot

SATURDAY 28th March

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

4:30 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Patricia Fletcher RIP (Jane Hemery)

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Chris Stemp's Intention (Annie Furlong)

SUNDAY 29th March ... PALM SUNDAY of the Passion of the Lord

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford

In your prayers, please remember: Margaret O'Conner, Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, Annie Furlong, Canon Peter Turbitt, Charles Hunt and all the sick and housebound.



DEATH/FUNERAL NOTICE

Ellen Bailey RIP ... Requiem Mass at 11:30am, Friday 27th March, English Martyrs Didcot.



Recruitment – Parish Administrator in Wantage

St John Vianney and Sacred Heart Parish is seeking a Parish Administrator. The Parish Administrator provides comprehensive administrative and organisational support to the Parish Priest, ensuring the smooth day-to-day operations of the parish. This role enables the Parish Priest to focus on pastoral duties while maintaining efficient administrative processes. As an employee of the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth, the Parish Administrator must adhere to all Diocesan policies and procedures, as well as any local arrangements authorised by the Parish Priest. This is a permanent, part-time working position of 12 hours per week at Marian House, Charlton Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 8ER. Please contact [Fr David](#) for more information. Application deadline: 29th March 2026.

Retrouvaille Marriage Support

From relationships that are 'Just in a Rut', needing some refreshment or more serious issues - if you are open to try again – Retrouvaille could be the solution. They have helped thousands of couples get their relationship back on track as they rediscovered hope and trust in the marriage. To find out more: www.retrouvaille.org.uk +44 797 338 0443. Retrouvaille is a marriage ministry, run by Catholics, to support marriages in trouble.

The Didcot Passion Play

Didcot local Christian Churches, *Christian Life Centre Didcot, Didcot Baptist Church, Grace Church, The Ladygrove Church, Redeemed Church of God (Salvation House), The Gate Didcot, The King's Church Didcot* have organized the Didcot Passion Play as part of the Didcot Easter Festival. Experience a dramatic retelling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and how He brings hope for our lives today. [Rise Theatre](#) for Reading will perform the play. Everybody is invited to come to the Easter Passion play for free on **Saturday 28 March at 3 pm, at the Orchard Centre, in front of Sainsbury's.**



Formation for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Fr Anthony Fyk is organising a formation morning for EMHC on Saturday 9th May 2026 at the Pastoral Centre in Winchester. There will be a welcome session from Fr Anthony, a talk by Fr Jeremy Corley, focussing on the Eucharist in the sacred scriptures as well as a session on Lectio Divina: "Living a Eucharistic life – what does it mean to live out the eucharist?". All Eucharistic Ministers, experienced and new, are very welcome to attend. Please could you advertise this in your newsletters and ask interested people to register via liturgy@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk.

Stations of the Cross for Cantonese Speakers

A Cantonese Stations of the Cross will be led by the Reading Hong Kong Catholic community at [St James Catholic Church](#) on Forbury Road, Reading, RG1 3FD on **Good Friday 3rd April 1:00-1:45pm**. Parking is available at Forbury Retail Park in Kenavon Dr, Reading, RG1 3HS. If you would like to help in the service, please let [Ada Chim](#) in our Parish Office know.

Registration For All Parishioners — Act NOW!

If you have not yet registered with our new online Parishioner Registration that has started this year, please REGISTER NOW! We need to stay in touch with you on the new system. The online registration process is simple and quick. For adults parishioners [click here](#) to register. To register children in your family, [click here](#). Links and QR Codes can also be accessed from our [parish website](#), parish flyers and posters on our noticeboards. Weekly Newsletters will be emailed to you if you have given us your consents to receive newsletters by email in your registration in the new platform. If you are not yet a Gift Aider, please consider registering with us by scanning the QR code provided to access the new online Gift Aid Declaration Form. Existing Gift Aiders will not need to re-register with us. Your Gift Aid information will be automatically migrated to our new system. Thank you.



Pastoral Area Penitential Rite & Holy Week

Our **Pastoral Area Penitential Rite** will be this **Tuesday 24th March** at English Martyrs Church Didcot at 7pm. Holy Week will start with **Palm Sunday** next week on **29th March**. Please arrive at **Didcot Girls' School Car Park** at 8:45am next Sunday for the procession before mass. Feel free to bring your floral decoration according to your tradition on that day. **Chrism Mass** will be on Tuesday 31st March at St John's Cathedral in Portsmouth. All are invited to attend the mass.

We need lots of volunteers in our Holy Week masses and activities: Maundy Thursday 2nd April 7:30pm mass, Good Friday 3pm mass, Holy Saturday Vigil Mass, and Easter Sunday Masses. Various lists with dates and masses shall be placed at the entrance of church for you to sign up to. Contact the Parish Office if you need help. Thank you.



Singers and Readers Needed at St John Wallingford!

We desperately need more singers for our little music group at St John's. You do not need to read music, just have a love of singing. So if you sing high or low please come and join us. We practise on Friday evenings from 7.15 for about an hour in the hall. Access via Wood Street - behind the church. Lectors or Readers are also desperately needed for the Saturday evening masses at St John's. A rota is prepared to ease availability. You don't have to read every week. Contact the Parish Office if you can help.

Easter Flower Donation

Kindly consider leaving some donations in support of the Flower Ladies who would need to buy flowers to decorate the altar during this festive season of Easter. Thank you ever so much. Every little help.



English Martyrs Gospel Reading Group

Please be informed that due to a clash with the Pastoral Area Penitential Rite, the meeting on **Tuesday 24th March will be cancelled and rescheduled to the following Tuesday 31st March**. See you on 31st at 7pm in the Tearoom. Contact Nick Spencer at 07870505520 if you have any questions.

Children Lenten Promise

Our children have been learning about praying and making small sacrifices this Lent in our Children Liturgy Class. Come and have a look at the Lenten Promise Board in the Children's Library corner with the lovely notes that our children have written this Lent around the themes of Fasting, Thankfulness and Prayers (upcoming: Kindness and Forgiveness). Support your children at home to put these into actions. Thank you all and especially to our wonderful Children Liturgy Team.



Święconka—The Blessing of Easter Baskets

The blessing of the Easter baskets is one of the most enduring and beloved Polish traditions on Holy Saturday. It is called Święconka. This special event takes place in many of our parishes across the diocese because of our Polish families who enrich our parish and liturgy. Are you Polish? Do you want to organize or be part of those to organize it on Holy Saturday 2nd April? Please let the Parish Office know if you want to help. Thank you.



Legal Professionals Needed

IS THERE A LAWYER IN THE HOUSE? The St Vincent de Paul Society is in need of some informal legal advice to help a client. If you think you can help, please contact Dominic Knight at dominic.knight100@gmail.com. Thank you.

Parish Safeguarding

Our Safety Officer for all adults and children safeguarding issues is Stefania Harford. Please contact Stefania via the parish office on 01235 812338. If there is no response and in an emergency, dial 999.