

READINGS

Reading I: Isaiah 22:19-23

Psalm: 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

Reading II: Romans 11:33-36

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Matthew 16:13-16

The symbolism associated with Caesarea Philippi is central to today's Gospel. Located north of Jesus' home base in Capernaum, it was a predominantly pagan city known for its shrines to false gods. One of the most prominent was Pan, after whom the region was named Panias (later Banias). Pan, a Greek god, was honored at a shrine near a large cave and spring considered the entrance to Hades. Pan was the god of nature, shepherds, flocks, wild places, fertility, and rustic music, and was often depicted as half man, half goat, with horns and hooves. He played the pan flute and was associated with lust, chaos, and sudden fear - from which we get the word panic.

Additionally, the city was the site of a temple dedicated to the late emperor, Caesar Augustus, who was worshiped as a god throughout the Roman Empire. It was into this spiritually dark pagan setting that Jesus led His disciples - on what may have been a two-day journey - for what culminated in a single, monumental question.

Jesus took the Twelve away from the comfort of their familiar fishing village and Jewish neighbours for a reason. He wanted them to answer His question not in the midst of the familiar and safe, but in a place marked by spiritual confusion and idolatry.

Why?

So that faith could be professed even there, and divine grace could confront the darkness that permeated the region.

At first, He asked who the people said He was. They answered, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." But then He posed the question that reached the heart of His mission: "But who do you say that I am?" This was a moment of divine testing - one which Simon passed with profound faith: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus' extraordinary and consequential response has enduring significance to this day. He declared:

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:17-19).

With these sacred words, Jesus founded His Church upon Peter, making him the first pope. In biblical tradition, a change of name signifies a new mission and identity. Simon, son of Jonah, was now to be called Peter - *Petros* in Greek and *Cephas* in Aramaic - meaning "rock." Peter became the solid foundation upon which Christ's Church would be built. No pagan power, false god, or earthly ruler would ever overcome what Christ established with divine authority.

Reflect today on the significance of the papacy. Even now, in the successor of Saint Peter, the words of Simon continue to echo throughout the world: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the pope's first and most important duty - to bear witness to Christ, the Son of God. Despite the personal weaknesses of some popes and the saintliness of others, it is Jesus who established Peter and his successors as the visible foundation of the Church. Pray for the Holy Father, and trust in the timeless witness of every pope since that first moment in Caesarea Philippi - a witness upheld not by human strength, but by Christ's own promise. To profess faith in the papacy is to profess faith in the One who instituted it and endowed it with His divine authority.

My Lord, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. With Simon, I profess this truth and place my faith in You, who established Simon, son of Jonah, as Peter—the rock and foundation of Your Church. I believe and profess that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the Church, not because of human strength or perfection, but because of Your eternal promise. I pray for our Holy Father, the pope, and for all his successors. Make them true and faithful witnesses to the confession first spoken by Saint Peter. Jesus, I trust in You.



Parish of Blessed Hugh Faringdon & Buckland Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time - 23RD August 2026

North Downs Pastoral Area

Diocese of Portsmouth

Parish Priest: Revd Claro Conde

email: cconde@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Telephone: 01367 358895

Website: www.blessedhugh.org.uk

1 Coxwell Road, Faringdon, SN7 7EB

Parish email:

Parish of Blessed Hugh Faringdon & Buckland



Ministries

Bible Studies - Dr. Neill Taylor & Paul Padley & Team

Family & Youth Catechesis (Confirmation) - Mrs. Helena & Emmanuel Boakye & Team

Children Catechesis (Children's Liturgy & FHC) - Mrs. Kathleen Thomas & Team

Evangelization Catechesis (Adult Evening Studies) - Dr JP Crilly & Team

Administrator & Maintenance - Andrew Chell

Office Secretary - Nerisa Gomez

Finance - Lorraine Brabin,

PPC & Youth & Children - Kathleen Thomas,

Safeguarding - Ann O'Reilly -

safeguarding.buck@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Mass Setting: Quiet Mass

Entrance Antiphon

**The Lord chose him for himself as high priest,
and opening his treasure house,
made him rich in all good things.**

Psalm: 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

**The queen stands at your right hand,
arrayed in gold.**

Gospel Acclamation

**Alleluia, alleluia!
You are Peter and upon this rock I will
build my Church
and the gates of the netherworld shall
not prevail against it. Alleluia!**

Sunday Mass is at 10am.

The Mass is usually also streamed on Facebook here:

<https://facebook.com/blessedhughfaringdonchurch/>

You can follow Fr. Claro's daily international Masses from his home on Facebook here:

<https://facebook.com/claro.conde/>

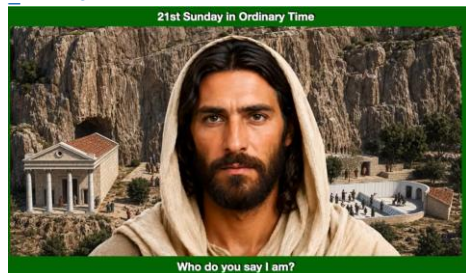
His current schedule (subject to change) is: 6.30 am Regular Daily Masses Monday to Sunday.

Bible Study

We have a Bible Study, reflecting on the coming Sunday Mass Readings, with Fr Claro on Zoom on Mondays from 7.00pm. To join please use the link on the Parish website home page.

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time - 23RD August 2026

YOUTUBE LINK for the Bible Study
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rhbs-mDx1c>



Today's readings tell us who we are as Catholics: We are people who proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one of God, the Son of the living God. And we are called into the community founded by Jesus the Christ, and built upon Peter, the rock, the one to whom Jesus entrusted the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.

This Sunday we welcome **Fr. Andrew Burnham** who will preside the Eucharistic Celebration.

TRAINING HOW TO USE THE SUNDAY MISSAL and how to be a good Reader at 930 Sunday, contact Dr. David Williamson

PPC & Finance Meetings, see in the parish website

MONDAY BIBLE ZOOM time 7pm

YOUTH MEETING every other Friday, contact Helena Boakye 07455 993296

News

Florence Eshalomi, a practising Catholic who is MP for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green, has been appointed the new Faith Minister.

A member of Christians in Parliament and chair of Friends of Cafod, she was named Minister for Homelessness by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, succeeding Lord Lemos. Her portfolio in this role includes democracy and communities as well as faith.

Her responsibilities will be faith community engagement, social cohesion, integration, anti-extremism and elections policy, as well as holding the crucial briefs for homelessness and rough sleeping which the Prime Minister has emphasised repeatedly as high priorities. Only today, Andy Burnham announced the next steps in his national drive to end rough sleeping by announcing immediate action to offer everyone who needs it a route off the streets by Christmas, backed by increased funding of £442 million.

Eshalomi grew up in Brixton where she attended Mass at Our Lady of the Rosary.

Writing in The Tablet in 2024, ahead of the General Election, she said, "As a Christian MP, I often come across the idea that Labour 'doesn't do God' and that there is somehow a tension between religion and progressive politics. The truth of course is that our party wouldn't exist if it wasn't for the Christians who, with other founders, put their faith and belief into action to form the Labour movement.

"From the beginning Christians have played a profound role in the life of our party. Christian activists, parliamentarians, ministers, and prime ministers have all played their part."

She added, "Faith has always been important to me personally. I have worshipped at Our Lady of the Rosary in Brixton for as long as I can remember. My two sisters were

were baptised there. My faith has grown there. My family and friends worship there. I met my husband there and we were married by our parish priest who conducted my first holy communion and confirmation. My two children were baptised there and my late mother's funeral was held at the church. It is my safe place where I can connect with God.

"Simply put, the Church has been an anchor of my life. In this country we are blessed with the freedom to worship God openly. But many of our brothers and sisters across the world do not have that luxury."

She also wrote of how her family comes from Nigeria and she still remembers with horror the attack on St Theresa Catholic Church in Abuja 15 years ago when on Christmas Day, a bomb killed 37 people and injured many more.

"While faith has an important role to play in our foreign policies, it is also vital that we continue to value the role of faith here in the UK. Whether responding to the destructive effects of austerity, supporting people through the pandemic, welcoming refugees from Syria, Hong Kong or Ukraine, or helping the most vulnerable through the cost-of-living crisis, faith makes a difference time and again," she continued. "As a Christian politician I hold a unique position. It is a privilege to serve and care for constituents of all faiths or none. As a Catholic in public life, I enjoy playing my part to help people from different communities and backgrounds to work towards the common good."

Writing in yesterday's Standard, she describes how she will never forget being homeless herself as a child: "The hopelessness of being stuck in temporary accommodation with my mum and sisters. Moving from place to place with our things in suitcases and bin bags. And then the huge relief when my mum finally got the keys to our first council house in Brixton, giving us a chance to put down roots in a community we love."

She says she got into politics to stand up for

those suffering such injustices and give them a voice. (Ruth Gledhill, 19 August 2026, The Tablet)

AUGUST - THE QUIET MONTH - WHY?

We have always (for the past thirty years!) taken a month off - with no music during in August. You may wonder why this is.

Reasons include:

1. There's a small minority of parishioners who feel there's far too much music; and really appreciate the quiet month. We try to cater for all.
2. The musicians get a month off - when they're not committed to turning up every Sunday
3. SAYING the words (to the Sanctus for example) allows the meaning to come through differently - and more deeply perhaps.
4. We then appreciate the music all the more when it comes back in September!
5. Variety is the spice of life?

As always - we really appreciated feedback and suggestions for what YOU would like to see and hear!

Children's liturgy- summer pause

Children's liturgy is paused for the summer holidays but will resume in September. A reminder that once your child has done their First Holy Communion, they are encouraged to stay in the church and participate in the whole of the Mass. We understand that some children who have done their First Holy Communion are still keen to attend the Children's Liturgy. However, no child in secondary school (that is over the age of 11) will be permitted to attend Children's Liturgy. This prevents the catechists from having to cope with a very large spread in ages and encourages the older children to participate in the Liturgy of the Word.

We encourage children that have done their First Holy Communion to consider becoming altar servers.