



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

December 2025

Dear friends

The reminder Jesus gives us in Advent, which is a common theme in our Advent hymns and readings too, is to keep awake, and it is not as abstract, or as speculative, or even as apocalyptic as it seems. What Jesus is asking us to do is this: “Look for me in those who seem to be the least in our society. Where you see suffering, keep watch with that person, keep vigil with them, support them.” While we’re looking up into the clouds, waiting for Jesus to storm in on his chariot, he’s here among us, with us, Emmanuel (which means “God with us”).



Advent is the season of waiting. But if Christ is already out there in the world living among the most needy, then what exactly are we waiting for? I don’t think we’re waiting for a warrior God to come in on the clouds. That military vision of a warrior God vanquishing and triumphing is contrary to everything we hear in Isaiah about peace. And that military vision is exactly the problem with much of what happens, what calls itself Christianity, in the world today. It is people who are waiting for war. Who pick up weapons, and do horrifying things and commit awful acts of violence in the name of Christianity or Christian morality. Or in the rise of antisemitic hate speech and hateful acts. This rise of Christian nationalism (which we shouldn’t even call Christian nationalism, because that is like justifying it) should fill us with horror. People have been guilty of this sort of thing in the name of Christianity for two thousand years.

Remember that Jesus tells them to put away their swords in Gethsemane. Jesus is not the agent of violence. He stands with the poor, and the neglected, and the suffering, and the despised. And so, of course, must we. “Keep awake”, Jesus says. And what does staying awake look like? I think it means being aware of who is suffering; being aware of who is poor, and ignored, and despised; and in their times of distress, going to them, and staying with them, and supporting them, until their crisis is over. It means refusing to leave them lost, or afraid, or abandoned. This is the example of the first disciples two thousand years ago. They didn’t let go. It is what the Christian Church has done for two millennia. And yet, this Advent, by the grace of God, the call comes to us again. Keep awake.

I wish you all a very joyful and happy Christmas and a new year blessed with inner peace and good health.

Fr. Raymond Thompson
Archdeacon

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(My “desk picture” above shows an Isle of Sheppey scene as viewed from my desk, or from the garden, or within a few minutes of it.)

Grooming and abuse in the Church

Grooming is a process used by perpetrators to build trust and establish emotional connections with their victims, whether their goal is mental, physical, sexual or spiritual abuse, or a combination of these. Within the Church, where trust and authority are central, grooming can be particularly insidious. Here are some key points to help us recognise grooming:

1. **Establishing Trust:** Perpetrators often seek to gain the trust of both the victim and the community. They may present themselves as caring, trustworthy individuals, and may hold positions of authority within the church.
2. **Emotional Manipulation:** Groomers use tactics such as flattery, gifts, and special attention to manipulate their victims emotionally. They may exploit vulnerabilities, such as feelings of loneliness or low self-esteem, to create a sense of dependence.
3. **Testing Boundaries:** Groomers gradually push boundaries, testing what the victim is willing to tolerate. This can start with seemingly innocent behaviours and escalate to more overtly abusive actions.
4. **Isolation:** Perpetrators often seek to isolate their victims from friends, family, and other sources of support. They may use a religious or spiritual narrative to justify this isolation, making the victim feel that their relationship with the perpetrator is special or blessed by God.
5. **Secrecy:** Groomers rely on secrecy to maintain control over their victims. They may explicitly or implicitly threaten the victim with harm or shame if they disclose the abuse.

Recognising Danger Signs

Here are some warning signs to watch out for:

1. **Excessive Attention:** A leader or member of the church showing an unusual amount of attention to a particular individual, especially a child or a vulnerable or impressionable adult.
2. **Boundary Violations:** Behaviours that cross appropriate boundaries, such as inappropriate or unwelcome touching, invading personal space, or overly personal conversations.
3. **Gifts and Favours:** Providing gifts, favours, or special privileges to certain individuals as a means of gaining their trust and loyalty.
4. **Secrets and Special Relationships:** Encouraging secrecy or fostering a sense of exclusivity in a relationship, particularly between a leader and a member of their congregation or organisation.
5. **Isolation:** Attempts to isolate individuals from their usual sources of support, or turn them against them, including family, friends, or other members of the church community.
6. **Manipulative Language:** Using religious or spiritual language to manipulate or control others, particularly in justifying inappropriate behaviour or in demanding obedience.
7. **Resistance to Accountability:** Leaders or members who become resistant or defensive when questioned about their actions, especially concerning interactions with vulnerable individuals.

We, in all our congregations and any organisations connected to our churches, however loosely, have to learn to recognise any of the signs described above and report any suspicions to our local safeguarding officer, child protection services, or the police. It will not always be easy to detect signs, especially at first, and it is not easy to accept that someone we may have known and trusted for a long time may not be exactly the person we thought they were. Naturally, sometimes misunderstandings can occur, however it is always important to approach this matter objectively. In our Diocese we have a Safeguarding Policy which is available on our Website and provides more information. It is a responsibility incumbent on all of us to protect all vulnerable or impressionable members of God's family, whatever their age.