

The Story of Alban

Alban lived during the third century in the Roman city of Verulamium. He was a worshipper of Roman gods, until one day he gave shelter to a stranger fleeing persecution. The stranger was a Christian priest, and Alban was so moved by his faith and courage that he asked to be taught more about Christianity.

Before long the authorities came to arrest the fugitive priest. But Alban, inspired in his new-found faith, exchanged clothes with him, allowing him to escape. The Roman soldiers were furious at this deception and instead arrested Alban and brought him before the judge, who ordered that Alban should receive the punishment due to the priest, if he had indeed become a Christian.

Alban refused to renounce his faith by sacrificing to the Roman gods, and instead declared: 'I am Alban, and I worship and adore the true and living God, who created all things'.

He was brought out of the town, across the river and up a hill to the site of execution where his head was cut off. Legend tells us that the bridge over the river was so crowded that Alban was forced to cross through the water, which dried up for him. On the hill-top a spring of water miraculously appeared to quench Alban's thirst; and the executioner's eyes fell out after he had beheaded Alban.

Alban is honoured as the first British martyr, and his grave (on which the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban was built) quickly became a place of pilgrimage. For over 1700 years, people have journeyed to this place to remember Alban, to pray for peace and healing, and to seek God.

Giant puppets retell the story of Alban's martyrdom, as pilgrims retrace the route from the place of Alban's trial to the hill on which he was executed. It is not only a stunning spectacle; it is a profoundly moving experience.

Why celebrate Saint Alban?

Alban's story takes us right back to the beginning of the Christian faith in Britain, but it remains fresh and inspiring for Christians today.

- First, because it reminds us of the unbroken continuity of faith in Christ in this land for over 1700 years;
- Second, because it sets before us a powerful example of courage, compassion, hospitality and generosity as Alban risks his life to welcome a persecuted stranger;
- Third, because Alban's martyrdom reminds us that witnessing as a Christian always comes at a cost;
- Fourth, because we believe that Alban is still alive and present to us in the Communion of Saints, and we come to worship God with him and ask his prayers.

Alban died unbaptized, never having attended a church service, without owning or reading a bible, without ever serving on a committee or taking part in a training scheme. Yet he gave his life for his faith in Jesus Christ, a faith which transcends all Christian divisions and disagreements.

The St Albans Festival Pilgrimage

10.30

Pilgrimage Procession

*From Roman Verulamium (the site of Alban's trial)
See map on centre pages*

11.30

Festival Eucharist

Preacher: The Rt Revd Graeme Knowles, Dean of St Paul's

11.30

Children's Worship and Activities

In the Abbey Primary School. Celebrations of St Alban continue with drama, games and worship. All children welcome.

From lunchtime food and drink will be available from the Café at the Abbey and stalls on the Abbey Orchard, along with chariot racing, lion taming, bouncy castles, circus skills, and lots more.

14.00 **Molieben** (*Orthodox Service of Intercession*)
held at the Shrine of Saint Alban: all welcome.

16.00 **Festival Evensong and Procession to the Shrine**
Preacher: The Revd Canon Giles Fraser, Vicar of Putney

Other Information

Groups and individuals are warmly welcome to take part in the Festival Pilgrimage. To help with our planning, **please register to let us know you're coming!** To register, please contact the Cathedral Office on 01727 890245 or email pilgrimage@stalbanscathedral.org.uk.

Children

Younger pilgrims are welcome to any and every part of the day. This year, for the first time, there is the chance for them to gather together and celebrate Alban with worship, drama and games, while the Festival Eucharist is taking place in the Cathedral. Those who want to attend this part of the day, and who are not dressed up as characters in the procession, should be accompanied by an adult, and should make their way to the Abbey Primary School once the procession has finished. All children will be brought up to the Abbey towards the end of the Eucharist to receive the Sacrament (if they have been admitted to communion) or a blessing.

Banners

Parishes are encouraged to bring their parish banners for the Pilgrimage Procession.

Priests

All priests are invited to robe for the procession (alb and red stole) and to join in concelebrating the Eucharist. If you are a priest who is not used to concelebration, please be assured that it is very straightforward! Instructions are available in advance and on the day. Experience shows that parish groups feel involved in a special way if their priest is involved in concelebrating the Eucharist. However, we recognise that some clergy will not wish to concelebrate: they are still welcome to robe and join in the clergy procession.

Priests intending to robe for the Procession and Eucharist should vest in St Michael's Parish Centre and be ready for a briefing in the museum car park by 10.20 am, in order for the Procession to start promptly at 10.30 am. Personal belongings can be left in the Parish Centre, which will be locked. They should be collected between 2 and 3 pm.

Candles

Candles can be lit at any time at the Shrine during the day.

Roses

It is traditional for pilgrims to wear a red rose, symbolising the Martyr's blood and the roses which, according to legend, sprang up as Alban passed by on the way to his execution. The rose is left at St Alban's Shrine at the end of the pilgrimage as a sign of devotion, and as a request for his continued prayer as you journey home. Roses will be available at the Abbey during the day for purchase by donation.

Food and Drink

Pilgrims are welcome to bring a picnic to eat on the Abbey Orchard. The Café at the Abbey (located on the ground floor of the Chapter House) will also be open, serving snacks, lunches and drinks. On the Orchard itself there will be a variety of stalls selling food and drink.

Gift Shop and Bookstall

Situated in the Chapter House and South Transept, the Gift Shop and Bookstall presents an attractive range of religious items, a range of religious and secular books, ornaments, jewellery, souvenirs and other pilgrimage merchandise.

Travelling to St Albans

By Rail

St Albans is situated about 25 minutes from London St Pancras on the First Capital Connect service through central London from the South Coast and Gatwick to Luton and Bedford. The Silverlink service via Watford Junction connects St Albans with the North London line and the West Coast mainline to London Euston and Scotland. The Abbey is a 10 minute walk away from St Albans City station.

By Road

Close to the M1, A1 and M25, St Albans is easily accessible from all parts of the UK.

By Bus and Coach

St Albans has a comprehensive local bus network with services from North London, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Luton and Watford. The Green Line service links St Albans with Heathrow airport and West London through to Harlow in Essex.

When you get to St Albans

Coaches may drop off in the Verulamium Museum car park (signposted Roman Verulamium), from where the procession sets off. After dropping off, coaches are advised to park at the Festival Car Park at Westminster Lodge. There is no parking available at the Museum.

Coaches or cars dropping pilgrims off at the Cathedral should park further down the hill (Holywell Hill) at Westminster Lodge Festival Car Park.

Please see the map on the centre pages for more details, including the location of car parks and the processional route.

Parking

Free parking is available at the Festival Car Park at Westminster Lodge (permit required; please contact the Cathedral Office on 01727 890245 or email pilgrimage@stalbanscathedral.org.uk). Please see the main map on the centre pages for details of the main coach drop off points, the location of car parks, disabled parking provision and parking for coaches during the day. There is no parking at the Verulamium Museum.

Cathedral Precincts

Parking in Sumpter Yard is for disabled and resident parking only.

Disabled Facilities

Disabled parking is available in Sumpter Yard (please apply to the Cathedral Office for a parking permit). Those who wish to take part in the Pilgrimage Procession should be aware that they will need to leave 30 minutes to go through the park via the Abbey Orchard to get to the start of the Procession.

Entrance to the Cathedral for pilgrims needing disabled access is via the North Churchyard or the Slype. Please note that the Cathedral will be closed before the Festival Eucharist until the Procession has arrived at the Abbey Orchard. There are accessible toilets in the South Ambulatory.

It is helpful to let the Cathedral Office know in advance if any pilgrims have special access or seating requirements so that we can make appropriate provision for them and any companion who is assisting them on the day. Any pilgrim who needs any additional help is asked to bring a carer with them.