

The Catholic Parish of St Mary, Leek

This parish is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham Registered Charity No 234216

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“Our vision is to be a Catholic Parish living Christ’s command,
‘Love one another as I have loved you’.

- Saturday 25 November** 10am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Confessions
Stamp 3 **SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE**
Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17; Ps 22; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26; Matthew 25:31-46
6.15pm Mass Nikki Sheader
- Sunday 26 November** 10am Mass Maureen Kelly (Pat)
Stamp 3 1.30pm Polish Mass
4pm Rosary and Benediction
- Monday 27 November** **Feria in Ordinary Time**
Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20; Dan 3; Luke 21:1-4
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Donor’s Intention
- Tuesday 28 November** **Feria in Ordinary Time**
Daniel 2:31-45; Dan 3; Luke 21:5-11
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass For you, the People of the Parish.
- Wednesday 29 November** **Feria in Ordinary Time**
Daniel 5:1-6, 13-14, 16-17, 23-28; Dan 3; Luke 21:12-19
9.40am Rosary 10am Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion
- Thursday 30 November** **Feast of St Andrew, Apostle, Patron saint of Scotland**
Romans 10:9-18; P 18; Matthew 4:18-22
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Talitha Rose RIP
- Friday 1 December** **Feast of St Edmund Campion, Priest, Martyr: First Friday**
1 Corinthians 4:9-13; Ps 33; Luke 9:23-26
Mass in church today 9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Barbara Higgins
- Saturday 2 December** 10am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Confessions
Stamp 4 **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Isaiah 63:16-17, 64:1, 3-8; Ps 79; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37
6.15pm Family Mass Pauline Milward RIP (GM)
- Sunday 3 December** 10am Mass Piotr Zwierski RIP
Stamp 4 1.30pm Polish Mass
4pm Rosary and Benediction

Parish Priest	Fr Martin Pratt	tel 01538 382385 stmary.leek@rcaob.org.uk
Parish Administrator	Mrs Alice Murray	
St Mary’s Catholic Academy	Mrs G Turner	tel 01538 493888
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Hospital Chaplaincy	University Hospital North Midlands	tel 01782 676400
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Parish Safeguarding The Parish operates in accordance with Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and the National and Archdioceses policies & procedures at all times. Our Parish Safeguarding Representative is Malcolm Sproat. He can be contacted at: sg.stmary.leek@rcaob.org.uk or alternatively the Diocesan Safeguarding team can be contacted on 0121 230 6240/ safeguarding@rcaob.org.uk if you have any concern.

The Pope’s Prayer Intention for November For the Pope. We pray for the Holy Father; as he fulfils his mission, may he continue to accompany the flock entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Please pray for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life Can you set aside one day each month to pray for Vocations? If so, could you sign the list at the back of church, please.

Please pray for the sick Jenny Kirkham, Moyra Chadwick, Chris Rea, Kathryn Higginbotham, Norman Syddall, Andrew Clifford, Janusz Szura-Zwierski, Fr Anthony Dykes.
Due to data protection legislation, in order for a name to be printed in this newsletter, the consent of the person who is unwell needs to be given.

Prayers for the Faithful Departed We have been asked to pray for the repose of the soul of Fr Sean Turley, a priest of the Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware who has worked in the Archdiocese of Birmingham since 1995

Anniversaries for this week: Gertrude Mary Donnelly, Donald Kirkby Brough, Mary Agnes Burgess, Mary Magdalene May, Edward Salt, Father Charles Eagle (PP 1924-1936), Tadeucz Bodgafurk, Beatrice Mary Robinson, Patricia Anne Upton, Patrick Doherty, Elizabeth Steele, Amy Chilcott, Evelyn Kwiatkowski, Rose Ada Flanagan, Horace Edward Millward, Emily Wain, Walter Andrews, Talitha Rose (Tally), Doris Winifred Barrett, James Joseph O’Brien, Teresa Alcock, Joseph Barlow, Michael Hughes, Robert Murfin, Mary Carding, Stanislaw Dymn, Elizabeth Earley, Stanislaw Joslow, James Stewart, Sadie Knight, Lilian Oliver, Iris Mary Sheldon, Eileen Veronica (Vera) Stevenson, Harry Wright, Dennis Raymond Hulland, Basil Laurence Saum, Norman Clulow

Dear friends, this weekend, the Church celebrates Christ the King and it is World Youth Day so we can recognise the contribution of young people in the life of our parish. For the Saturday evening Mass we have invited students from Painsley Catholic College to be at Mass and to help with Readings, Bidding Prayers and the Offertory Procession. When we started our part in the process which contributed to the recent Synod in Rome, we identified the collective ambition that we as a parish reach out to young people, children and families. This is incredibly important and part of this is the role of the two Schools: St Mary's Academy and Painsley Catholic College: we have structure and a working relationship already in place between the Parish and Schools and families. I want to urge everyone to be part of this because it is crucial for the future of the parish and our schools. Let's have confidence in the children and young people to take roles in church and the parish such as those we see at Mass. We can have confidence in our young people in other areas of parish life such as the administration of the 200 Club. Earlier this week, our parish was represented at the North Staffordshire Area Pastoral Council by two young parishioners. Let's encourage all the young people of our parish. Let's encourage them to be part of Mass and let's give them a role in the community.

Saturday 25 November 615pm Mass with Painsley Students and their families Today (Saturday) we welcome students and staff from Painsley Catholic college. It is great that you can be here for Mass. Every parishioner at St Mary's wants you to be at church with a role Sunday by Sunday.

Year of Prayer 2024 Next week, the Season of Advent begins and with it the Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee Year of 2025. Pope Francis has called us make the Year of Prayer, "a great symphony" of prayer. Please be generous in making time for prayer!

Winter Weather Team I am asking for help ahead of any winter weather and for a team of volunteers to move snow and apply grit in the car park and along the two walkways to the church. Many of the people who used to do this aren't able to help any longer. If you can help, please let Fr Martin know.

Sacramental Preparation Sacramental Preparation is underway. The children preparing for First Holy Communion and Confirmation have their second Mass Attendance and Activity sheet. I want to encourage parents and carers to continue to bring their children to Mass.

New Altar Servers Our new altar servers have made a great start and are doing great. Tuesday 26 December is the Feast of St Stephen the First Martyr and the patron saint of Altar Servers. I ask that the new altar servers attend Mass every weekend from now until then so that during Mass on 26 December they can be admitted into the Guild of St Stephen and receive their Altar Serving medal. It isn't a badge to acknowledge several weeks of altar serving, it is the badge of the members of the Altar Serving Guild.

Going into hospital If you are going into to hospital, there is now no obligation for the hospital to inform its chaplaincy department of your admission. When admitted to hospital, please ask the hospital to be in contact with their chaplain. Alternatively, be in contact with me and I make contact with the chaplain for you.

November, a month of prayer for the Faithful Departed, the Holy Souls It is a long standing tradition in the church to pray for the Holy Souls during the month of November.

Prayer intention envelopes Especially prepared prayer intention envelopes are available at the back of the church. Write and place into the envelopes the names of your relatives and friends who have died then place the envelope in the receptacle which is near the statue of the Sacred Heart.

Getting ready for Advent at St Mary's

Let's read St Luke's Gospel for Advent! Luke's Gospel has 24 chapters. This may seem a daunting task, but it isn't that difficult. It would be a great united action for everyone in our parish to read one chapter of Luke on the 24 days before Christmas. I have ordered some large print copies of Luke's Gospel which includes a very good introduction. If you would like a copy they are £4.99 each and are available at the Piety Stall at the back of the church. When reading St Luke during Advent, I suggest that you keep a personal reading journal. In your journal note down the phrases that Jesus says and the images which have been recorded by the Gospel-writer which inspire, encourage and challenge you. Make a note of what inspires, gives courage and makes a demand.

St Mary's Christmas cards There are Christmas cards on sale at the back of the church. The image on this year's card is that of the scene of the stable in Bethlehem which has been taken by one of our parishioners, a keen and talented photographer. Christmas cards are in packs of 10 and are on sale for £3.50.

Christmas trees and flowers This year, we want to have two Christmas trees in church: one either side of the sanctuary. Instead of a collection, would you be able to make a donation towards the Christmas trees and the flower in church, please? If so, please place a donation in an envelope marked "Christmas Trees and Flowers." I am incredibly grateful for all the donations which have been made: you are very generous and I am thankful to you all!

Sunday 10 December 3pm Charity Carol Service For a number of weeks, preparations have been taking place for a Charity Carol Service. We want to include young people in this occasion. We have been in contact with both Painsley and St Mary's. Refreshments have been arranged. We are also including a raffle and a collection for two charities: the Parish SVP so that they can continue their mission of food deliveries to parishioners and to Haregate Community Centre. Please do come along and invite your families and friends.

Can you help with the following, please? Welcoming people to church and giving out Orders of Service
Altar Serving Reading bible readings during the Service

If you are able to help with any of these please sign the list at the back of church.

St Mary's Christmas Raffle The raffle tickets for this year's Raffle will soon be here! There are some great prizes to be won. Including, £50 cash; bottle of whiskey; lunch voucher; and an afternoon tea voucher. The raffle draw will take place on Sunday 17 December.

Walk with Me The prayer booklets for Advent have arrived and are available at the back of church with the suggested donation of £1. The theme for this Advent is from the Gospel canticles of Mary, Zechariah, Simeon and Anna and the good examples of St John Baptist and the Magi. Together these characters from the New Testament help us to look forward to the celebration of Jesus's birth at Christmas and the Second Coming.

Best Advent Ever Get A Daily Dose of Radical and Relevant Wisdom Most people spend the month before Christmas feeling overwhelmed, busy, anxious, and anything but peaceful. With so much worry, it's easy to miss out on the beauty and joy of Advent. Don't let that be you this year. Sign up for BEST ADVENT EVER and make the radical choice to slow down and spend just a few minutes each day immersed in God's word. As Matthew Kelly guides you through the Gospels, you'll discover just how relevant Jesus' wisdom is to every aspect of your daily life. You'll be inspired and challenged to make the most of Advent by getting to the heart of what truly matters...and putting aside what hardly matters at all. Don't just count down the days until Christmas. Make the most of each day of Advent. Sign up for BEST ADVENT EVER and treat each day as an opportunity to transform your life. To sign up visit www.dynamiccatholic.com/advent.html

Bishop Barron's Daily Gospel Reflection Bishop Robert Barron is the Bishop of Winona Rochester, Minnesota. His daily Gospel reflections are read by tens of thousands each day. Sign up for his daily Gospel reflections for the Season of Advent, visit www.wordonfire.org/reflections

Looking ahead to Christmas at St Mary's This year Christmas Day, 25 December, will be celebrated on a Monday and for us Catholics it is a Holy Day of Obligation. When Christmas Day is a Monday, the Church asks us to be generous in our devotion to Christ and reminds us that we are part of the Universal Worldwide Church; we are part of a community of believers who transmit the light of Christ. This year and on those years when Christmas Day is a Monday, there is expectation that we show our devotion to Christ and our place in the Church by being at Mass for

The Fourth Sunday of Advent either Saturday 23 December at 615pm or Sunday 24 December at 10am

For Christmas Day Sunday 24 December at 615pm, Monday 25 December at 12 midnight and 10am

Let's start to consider what we will give to Christ for this Christmas: let's be generous to him, it will be worth it!

Can you help with the Christmas Masses at St Mary's? I am asking for your help with the Christmas Masses: I am asking for your help especially as stewards who will welcome parishioners to the church, hand out hymn books and Mass sheets. If you can help, please be in contact with Fr Martin.

Christmas Prayer Tree This year we will have prayer tree located near the Nativity Scene. Its purpose is for parishioners to write the name of a deceased loved one onto a wooden angel decoration and hang onto the Christmas Tree in their memory. I am grateful for the suggestion as well as donations of the tree, the decorations and the wooden angels.

Christmas Nativity Scene This year marks the 800th anniversary of St Francis of Assisi establishing the first Christmas Nativity Scene at Greccio near Rieti. On 29 November, 1223, St Francis was returning from Rome having received confirmation of his Rule to establish the Franciscan Order from Pope Honorius III when he stopped at Greccio. He was reminded of his visit to the Holy Land and the similarity of the geography around Bethlehem. We are told from the Franciscan archives that 15 days before Christmas of 1223, St Francis asked a local man to help him bring to life the Christmas Nativity Scene. On Christmas Day of that year, Franciscan Friars and people gathered together. When St Francis arrived, a live nativity had been arranged and the priest celebrated Mass.

On Monday of this week, the Christmas Nativity Scene will be set up in the Market Square. Please do go and look at it and say a prayer there. Don't walk passed. Make a Holy Moment by visiting the Crib.

Please do set up a Christmas Nativity Scene at home. Make it a family activity. Be sure to make a daily Holy Moment of praying for your family at the Christmas Nativity Scene.

Dates for your diary

Sunday 26 November 200 Club Draw

Thursday 30 November 1230pm Chips and Chat – please sign the list at the back of church, please hand your monies in an envelope indicating your order from the items on the list.

Saturday 2 December 615pm Family Mass

Friday 8 December Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary 10am Mass in church

Sunday 10 December 3pm Carol Service in church

Thursday 21 December Church cleaning for Christmas – can you help, please?

Love Christmas Project We are excited to be working with schools and parishes across the Staffordshire Moorlands on the 'Love Christmas' project again this year. This match-funded community project aims to fill and deliver over 200 'bags of kindness' to be given to anyone who may find Christmas a challenge in any way this year. In giving them a bag of kindness we hope that they will receive through us a sign of the love and hope which Christ's coming and Christmas brings. Recipients can be old or young, single, married or a family. There are many ways you can help!

Bring donations of items to go into the bags of kindness – Christmas groceries, treats, gifts, toys, toiletries are all welcome. Please label them 'Love Christmas project' and bring to church.

Could you help to **deliver any bags of kindness** to someone who would appreciate it in the week from Monday 18 December? (picking up from your parish church and taking them where you know they would be welcomed?)

Are you able to give an hour to assist in **packing the bags** of kindness in December at St John's parish, Alton?

Talk about it – **spread the word** among the community! **Pray** for the project! If you can offer to help or need any further information please email: anna.howard@kenelmyouthtrust.org.uk

North Staffordshire Deanery news

PRAYER & LIFE WORKSHOPS Prayer & Life Workshops are a way for people to learn to read the Bible, discover prayer, and to gain joy of heart. We are offering an opportunity to experience the Prayer & Life Workshops to people from our Deanery. It is a great way to prepare for the coming Year of Prayer.

The workshops are offered **for men** on Saturdays beginning on 4 November (not too late to join!) with an introductory session, at St Joseph's Church, Goldenhill from 9.30 to 11.30am. Come for tea, coffee and a bacon butty at 9am. There is another workshop **for everyone** on Fridays beginning 10th November at St Joseph's Goldenhill, from 10am to 12noon.

There will also be a workshop **for everyone** at Our Lady & St Werburgh's church, Clayton, on Saturdays beginning 18 November from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

WALSINGHAM ASSOCIATION THREE-DAY PILGRIMAGE MARCH 2024 The Association are organising a three-day pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham from Wednesday 20 to Saturday 23 March 2024. Booking for non-members is now available, and it would be great to have parishioners from around the Deanery - those who wish to renew their friendship with Our Lady at her shrine, and those who have never been to England's Nazareth. The cost for the pilgrimage together with en suite accommodation is £354, and in budget accommodation is £297. For more information and bookings please contact Mary Shirley on maryroseshirley@gmail.com

NORTH STAFFS GUILD OF CATECHISTS Our Deanery has a great group of catechists who get together regularly for support of each other, and for sharing materials, ideas, and training. We would like to extend the membership to all those in the Deanery who actively give catechesis (trained and untrained catechists as well as school teachers who do sacramental preparation). Our WhatsApp group and Facebook page are a great way to keep up to date with our Guild activities, and to find out about training sessions both in person and online. To sign up for the WhatsApp group or to find out about our activities please email Fr Julian on fr.julian.green@rcaob.org.uk

Our next meetings will be: A resource evening on the Evangelium resource which can be used for RCIA or adult catechesis. This will be on Friday 1 December at 7pm at Coolock in Newcastle.

We also have a full training day with the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph on Saturday 17 February 2024 at Our Lady & St Peter's Parish, Stoke. Further details will be published shortly.

Pope's diocesan World Youth Day Message In a letter ahead of the 38th diocesan World Youth Day, Pope Francis describes youth as a time of "hopes and dreams" and asks how this optimism can be sustained in an increasingly crisis-ridden world. Pope Francis released a message ahead of the 38th diocesan World Youth Day, which will be celebrated on 26 November 2023.

In his letter, entitled "Rejoicing in Hope", Pope Francis says that Christian hope is not "facile optimism" but rather certain knowledge of God's presence among us, and proposes strategies for maintaining and sharing this positivity in dark times.

Hopelessness "Rejoice in Hope", the theme of Pope Francis' World Youth Day letter, is a quotation from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Reflecting on the saint's words, the Pope says that "youth is a time full of hopes and dreams, stirred by the many beautiful things that enrich our lives: the splendour of God's creation, our relationships with friends and loved ones... and so many other things."

However, he notes, we are living in a period of crisis, of war, when "for many people, including the young, hope seems absent." Many, he says, "feel as if they are in a dark prison, where the light of the sun cannot enter."

In such situations, Pope Francis asks, "How can we experience the joy and hope of which Saint Paul speaks? When we think of human tragedies, especially the suffering of the innocent, we too can echo some of the Psalms and ask the Lord, 'Why?'"

Paths toward hope In his letter, Pope Francis suggests two ways to maintain Christian hope in such difficult times.

The first of these, he says, is to recognise that hope is not "a product of our human efforts, plans or skills." It is, rather, "born of an encounter with Christ. Christian joy comes from God himself, from our knowledge of his love for us."

"Christian hope", the Pope explains, "is no facile optimism, no placebo for the credulous: it is the certainty, rooted in love and faith, that God never abandons us and remains faithful to his promise: 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me'."

A second method for maintaining hope in the midst of suffering, he says, is to recognise that "we can also be part of God's answer to the problem."

"Created by Him in His image and likeness, we can be signs of His love, which gives rise to joy and hope even in situations that appear hopeless," he says.

Hope grows when shared Having received this joy and hope, Pope Francis says, we cannot keep it to ourselves. "Nurture the spark that has been kindled in you," he urges, "but at the same time share it. You will come to realize that it grows by being given away!"

In particular, he asks, "Stay close to your friends who may be smiling on the outside but are weeping within, for lack of hope. Do not let yourselves be infected by indifference and individualism."

We cannot keep our Christian hope to ourselves, "like a warm feeling", Pope Francis urges. "It is meant for everyone."

Second Collections The next Second Collection will be Sat 11 / Sun 12 December Poor Parishes of the Diocese
Collection Gift Aid £137.75 Non Gift Aid £121.76 Total £259.51, thank you for your kind generosity.

Have a good week! With my prayers and best wishes, Fr Martin