

The Catholic Parish of St Mary, Leek
This parish is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham Registered Charity No 234216
Compton, LEEK, Staffordshire, ST13 5NH

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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 16 December Stamp 6	10am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Confessions THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT <i>Gaudete Sunday</i> <i>Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11; Lk 1:46-54; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8</i> 6.15pm Mass Dennis Wilkes RIP
Sunday 17 December Stamp 6	10am Mass Pam Webb RIP (PAT) 1.30pm Polish Mass 4pm Rosary and Benediction
Monday 18 December	Advent Feria <i>O Adonai</i> <i>Jeremiah 23:5-8; Ps 71; Matthew 1:18-24</i> 9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Shirley Regan RIP (JR)
Tuesday 19 December	Advent Feria <i>O Radix Jesse</i> <i>Judges 13:2-7, 24-25; Ps 70; Luke 1:5-25</i> 9.40am Rosary 10am School Mass in church Ray Cossburn RIP (GC) (Contingency arrangement 10am Mass in School) 1pm Funeral Liturgy for Maureen Campanario RIP
Wednesday 20 December	Advent Feria <i>O Clavis David</i> <i>Isaiah 7:10-14; Ps 23; Luke 1:26-38</i> 9.40am Rosary 10am Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion
Thursday 21 December	Advent Feria <i>O Oriens</i> <i>Song of Songs 2:8-14; Ps 32; Luke 1:39-45</i> 9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Donor’s Intention
Friday 22 December	Advent Feria <i>O Rex Gentium</i> <i>1 Samuel 1:24-28; 1 Sam 2; Luke 1:46-56</i> 9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Joan Greenwood RIP
Saturday 23 December	10am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Confessions FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT <i>O Emmanuel; Day of Prayer for expectant mothers</i> <i>2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16; Ps 88; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38</i> 6.15pm Mass Barbara Duffin RIP
Sunday 24 December	10am Mass For you, the people of the parish. SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD: Christmas Day <i>Isaiah 9:1-7; Ps 95; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14</i> 6.15pm Vigil Mass for Christmas Eric Duffin RIP 9pm Polish Mass for Christmas
Monday 25 December	12 Midnight Midnight Mass Mabel and Harold Kelsall RIP 10am Christmas Day Mass Michael G Taaffe RIP (MT)

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
Painsley Catholic College, Cheadle	Mrs R Waugh	tel 01538 493777
Safeguarding Rep	Mr Malcolm Sproat	sg.stmary.leek@rcaob.org.uk
	Archdiocese of Birmingham	tel 0121 230 6240
	NSPCC	tel 0800 800 500
Gift Aid Co-ordinator	Mrs M Lawton	ga.stmary.leek@rcaob.org.uk
Hospital Chaplaincy	University Hospital North Midlands	tel 01782 676400
	Macclesfield District Hospital	tel 01625 663386

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 December For persons with disabilities. We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.

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.

Please pray for the Faithful Departed We pray for the repose of the soul of Maureen Campanario. Maureen’s Funeral will take place, here at St Mary’s, on Tuesday 19 December at 1pm.

Anniversaries for this week: Winifred Joyce Mellor, Mary Szczotka, Frances Roberta Turner, Freda Priestman,, Julia Hermit, Monsignor Alfred Sperling (PP 1884-1923), Alfred Whitworth, Richard James Halpin, John Bosco McCarron, Eileen Mary McNulty, Sheila Syddall, Freda Cecilia Halpin, Kenneth Worthington, Victoria Wersockas, Margaret Chant, Margaret Schonau, Joseph Delicata, Peter Nowell, Michael Noel Kelly, Joan Greenwood, Alice Mary Astles, Lucy Foster, Edward Szczotka, Beryl Edna Wheatley, Gladys May Wood, Barbara Duffin

Dear friends, "Love one another and I have loved you" **We have certainly put our mission statement into practice during the last week.**

Last Sunday, we had our Carol Service. For the Synod, we prioritised reaching out to young people and their families. Over a number of weeks, we worked hard with both Painsley Catholic College and Saint Mary's Academy to let the children and young people lead a Carol Service in church. This was well supported by a good number of parishioners and visitors from other parishes. We also raised some money to support the SVP and the Hargate Community Centre. Each charity will receive a cheque for £138. I am incredibly grateful to everyone who helped with the Carol Service the members of staff from the schools, those who prepared the refreshments, the raffle, and the music and singing!

Let's look ahead to next year's Carol Service. Following the disruption of the pandemic, let's continue to be united and to work together: Schools, parishes and families. If we are to hand on the riches of our Catholic faith to the children and young people, it is crucial that we remain united and work together. Let's keep up this good work!

Let's put our mission statement into practice in the next week! The celebration of Christmas is now only a week away! How will you celebrate Christ's birth this year? What present could you make to Christ on his birthday? Could you be at Mass during the week? Could you go to Confession before Christmas? Could you spend two periods of 5 minutes of prayer each day? Could you share your time, talent and treasure?

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

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.

Sunday 24 December 615pm Vigil Mass for Christmas I would like to invite the children and young people of our parish to take on roles during this Mass and to ask parents to support the children in doing so. I would like to ask young people to the following, please. I have received some great offers of help. I want to ask our young parishioners can you help with:

Two young people to lead the bidding prayers

Two young people to bring the gifts of bread and wine at the Offertory procession

Six young people to carry the candles

I have copies of the Readings and Bidding prayers.

The Sacrament of Confession before Christmas On Monday, I was at Painsley Catholic College for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I was there with three priests and together we celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation for a large number of the young people. The School Hall was prepared as a Chapel of Reconciliation with a waiting area, stations of Reconciliation where the priests celebrated the Sacrament and an area so that acts of penance could be made following the sacrament. The young people had received some formal preparation beforehand and on the day each pupil had a copy of an Examination of Conscience and either a red card indicating to the priest that the student wished to receive a blessing or yellow card which indicated the student wished to receive the Sacrament; the yellow card also included the Rite of Confession. The morning was very well prepared and a witness to the work of the Holy Spirit and the willingness of our young people to take part in the life of the Church.

Penance Services with Confession Here are the details of Penance Services next week:

St Augustine's, Meir, Monday 18 December at 7pm

St Giles, Cheadle, Tuesday 19 December at 7pm

Let's make the most of the last week of Advent

Let's be at Mass Mass for Sunday: Saturday evening at 615pm and Sunday morning at 10am. Mass in the Polish language is celebrated on Sunday at 130pm.

Let's go to Confession Saturday morning at 10am. Or, please call to make another arrangement.

Let's pray for 5 minutes every day

Let's share our time, talent and treasure – can you help as a member of the winter weather team? Can you help with church cleaning on Thursday 21 December?

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 I am incredibly grateful for all the donations which have been made: you are very generous and I am thankful to you all!

St Mary's Christmas Raffle The raffle tickets for this year's Raffle are here! Prizes include £50, bottle of whiskey, voucher for afternoon tea. Thank you for the donations of prizes.

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

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.

Year of Prayer, 2024 The beginning of the new Church year and the Season of Advent marks the beginning of the Year of Prayer which is uniting Catholics around the world to prepare for the Jubilee Year 2025. Pope Francis has an audacious vision for this year long preparation. His vision is, "I would greatly desire that we devote 2024, the year preceding the Jubilee event, to a great "symphony" of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him ... In a word, may it be an intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God's grace and to make the "Our Father," the prayer Jesus taught us, the life programme of each of his disciples"

Specially printed prayer cards are available at the back of church; there is one for everyone. During this Year of Prayer can you set aside 5 minutes to pray? Could you pray for our Parish Prayer intentions:

- the children and young people of parish preparing for First Holy Communion and Confirmation;
- for the sick and housebound parishioners;
- for families;
- for parents as the first teachers of the faith;
- for children suffering from sickness;
- for peace and justice.

Please do take your prayer card and let's be a parish joining in the great symphony of prayer!

Administration of Holy Communion Due to the prevailing risk of the virus, the norm for receiving communion remains on the hand. For those who wish to receive Communion on the tongue, please come to the Altar as the end of the congregational procession has received Communion, as the Minister of Holy Communion will need to sanitise his/her hands after every person receiving on the tongue.

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 The third Mass Attendance and Activity sheet will be available this weekend.

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.

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 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.

Pope Francis writes, "Indeed, the Nativity scene is "like a living Gospel" It Brings the Gospel to the places where people live: in homes, schools, work and meeting places, hospitals, retirement homes, prisons, and in the squares. And in those places where we live, it reminds us of an essential thing: that God did not remain invisible in Heaven, but rather came to earth, became man, a child. To make a Nativity scene is to celebrate God's closeness. God has always been close to his people but when he became incarnate and was born, he was very close, extremely close. To make a Nativity scene is to celebrate God's closeness; to rediscover that God is real, concrete alive and vibrant. God is not a distant lord or a detached judge but rather humble Love that descended upon us. The Child in the Nativity scene transmits his tenderness to us. Some small figurines portray the "Bambinello" with open arms to tell us that God came to embrace our humanity. It is beautiful then to stand before the Nativity scene and to confide our lives to the Lord, to speak to him of the people and situations that we have in our heart, to take stock with him of the year that is ending, to share our expectations and apprehensions."

The Christmas Nativity Scene has been 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 17 December After Mass – Christmas Raffle draw
Thursday 21 December Church cleaning for Christmas – can you help, please?
Thursday 21 December 630pm Bible Book Club

Sunday 24 December Sunday Social after Mass
Sunday 7 January 10am Mass with parents, families and Godparents of the children baptised at St Mary's during 2023.

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 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.

200 club It's time to renew your subscriptions to the 200 Club. Please fill out one of the envelopes at the back of the church and enclose cheques of £12 for your annual membership. Cheques should be made out to BRCDTR St Mary's, Leek. If you are not already taking part please consider joining the parish 200 Club this year as it raises valuable funds for the running of St Mary's church and the costs associated with our Masses. There are two monthly cash prizes to be won!

Mass 7 January 2024 During Mass on 7 January 2024 I have invited the parents and Godparents of the children Baptised during 2023 to 10am Mass, during Mass there will be a blessing for the parents and after Mass there will be a Sunday social when there will be an opportunity to meet.

Polish Mission WIADOMOŚCI PARAFIALNE PARAFIA RZYMSKO-KATOLICKA Matki Bożej Częstochowskiej i św. Maksymiliana Marii Kolbe Lokalna Polska Misja Katolicka w Stoke on Trent Masterson Street - Stoke on Trent ST4 3QB - ENGLAND Registered Charity no. 1119423. INFORMACJE O NASZEJ PARAFII DOSTĘPNE TAKŻE NA: www.parafiastokeontrent.pcmew.org Ks. prob. Jacek Jabłoński tel: 017 824 111 95 mob: 07799297021, mail: stoke@pcmew.org REKOLEKCJE ADWENTOWE Rekolekcje Adwentowe (15 – 17 grudnia 2023 r.). Rekolekcje poprowadzi o. Wojciech Cieciora OSPPE. Please see the poster. Mass times for Christmas at St Mary's Sunday 24 December 2100hrs Christmas Vigil Mass; there will be no Mass at 130pm on 24 December.

Collection Gift Aid £151.00 Non Gift Aid £86.25 Total £237.25

Collections The November 2023 standing order donations were £1,256.50p

Second Collection for the Poor Parishes of the Archdiocese of Birmingham raised £105.15

The collection on Christmas Day (the Vigil Mass, Midnight Mass and Day Mass) will be one of the two annual collections for the Parish Priest and forms a major part of his income.

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