

Parishes of St John XXIII & St Joseph, Birtley



Incorporating: Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, Washington;
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Penshaw; St Bede, Usworth;
St John Boste, Oxclose; St Joseph, Birtley
Fr Martin Morris, Parish Priest, Tel: 01916498257



Administrator: Audrey Huntley 0191 4163583 sj23office01@gmail.com

In the Partnership of Benedict

Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Penshaw, Sacriston, Washington

The 4th Sunday of Advent/Christmas Eve, 23 - 24 December 2023

The Holy Family, 30 - 31 December 2023, Year B

Saturday	St Bede	5pm	Maureen Joslin (nee Casey) RIP
23 December			
Vigil	St Joseph	5pm	Brian & Susan Towns RIP
Sunday			
24 December	St John Boste	9.30am	John Frazer
4th Sunday of Advent	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am	Terry & Brenden Ford & James McDevitte
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Jim Walker
Christmas Eve Vigil	St Bede	5pm*	William & Eileen Harland & Deceased Family
Carols 30 mins before Mass	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	5.30pm	Ann Smith R.I.P. & Deceased Family
	St Joseph	6pm*	Our Parish Family
*Indicates Streamed Masses	St John Boste	7pm	The Bartley & McGee Families
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	7.30pm	Dave Ranaghan
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11.30pm*	The People of the Parish

Last week I received a picture on my phone of our two-year-old Grandson dressed as an angel in his nursery Nativity play. He can be an angel, but not always. It did make me think how important Angels are in the Nativity story. We hear more of Angels in the Gospels around the story of the birth of Jesus than anywhere else. An Angel is a messenger from God, delivering the most important communications from God to his people. Usually, but not always, to one person.

The angel Gabriel visited Mary to ask if she would be the mother of God. Mary said yes! Joseph was reassured by an angel, in a dream, that it would be the right thing to take Mary as his wife, because all that was happening was the will of God, and that he had a vital role to play in God's plan for of salvation.

The angel visited the lowly shepherds who were in the dark night watching over their sheep, protecting them from wild animals and other dangers. The angel told them to go and visit the newborn child. It was important that the poorest of people should be the first guests to see the baby Jesus. The message of Jesus is meant for all and He connected to the poor and the marginalised throughout his ministry.

Before all this, Zacharia, the father of John the Baptist and cousin of Jesus, was told, by an angel, that he had to call his son John rather than one of the traditional family names. The lives of John and Jesus were intertwined from Mary's visit to Elizabeth to John's death at the hands of Herrod. John's ministry was to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus our saviour.

So, why the concentration of angels with messages around the nativity? Simply, because the birth of Jesus was the most important event in all human history. Without the birth of Jesus, we would not have redemption through the forgiveness of our sins. We would not know how much God loves each and every one of us. We would be lost rather than saved. So, over this Christmas season whenever you see an angel; as part of a crib or hear mention of an angel in a Gospel reading or see pictures of a child in a nativity play, remember why the messages these angels brought were so important. The birth of Jesus was the most important event in all human history.

Have a blessed, love filled and joyous Christmas.

Deacon Tony

Fr Martin Morris	0191 649 8257	Deacon Frank O'Neill	0779 115 5845
Fr Martin Wheaton	0770 996 1040	Deacon Peter Lavery	0730 505 9297
Fr Luke Wilkinson	0191 649 8257	Deacon Tony Joy	0779 989 3419

Mass Times & Intentions - Week Beginning Monday 25th December 2023

Day	Church	Time	Intention
Monday 25th December	St Bede	9am	Peace in Our World
Christmas Day	Our Lady Queen of Peace	9.30am	People of the Parish
	St Joseph	10am*	All those who are seeking shelter
	St John Boste	10.15am*	Bill Hudson RIP
Tuesday 26th December	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am *	Hall & Lyons Families
St Steven			
Wednesday 27th December	St Bede	10am*	Margaret & Thomas Banks & John Fletcher RIP
St John	St John Boste	10am	Mary Stephenson & Deceased Family
Thursday 28th December	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am *	John & Theresa McIntyre RIP
The Holy Innocents	St Joseph	12 Noon*	Kathleen Fish (Deceased)
Friday 29th December	St John Boste	10am*	Deceased Roberts, Redman & Bell Families
St Thomas a Becket	St Joseph	10am	Ron Fryer (Deceased)
Saturday 30th December	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	David Barry
Vigil	St Joseph	5pm*	Annie and Bobby Haigh (Deceased)
	St Bede	5pm	John Liddle RIP
Sunday 31st December	St John Boste	9.30am	Louise Tobin Davies
The Holy Family	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	Our Parish Family
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Thomas Robinson & Deceased Clark Family

* Indicates Streamed Mass

Readings for 4th Sunday of Advent

First Reading: A King Forever

2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14,16

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent.' Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.' But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: 'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me; if he does evil, I will punish him with the rod such as men use, with strokes such as mankind gives. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever."

Response to the Psalm: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

Second reading: The Last Secret

Romans 16:25-27

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, Alleluia! I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me. Alleluia.

The Gospel: The Annunciation

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

Mass Times & Intentions - Week Beginning Monday 1st January 2024

Monday 1st January Mary, Mother of God	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	12 Noon*	JW (Private Intention)
	St Joseph	12 Noon*	Zillah Richardson (Deceased)
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	7pm	Wilkinson & Bowden Families
Tuesday 2nd January St Basil the Great	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Mary & Michael Casey & Sons Michael, Matty & Harry RIP
	St Joseph	7pm*	Jones & Cockburn Families (Deceased Members)
Wednesday 3rd January Most Holy Name of Jesus	St Bede	10am*	The Lonely & Homeless
	St John Boste	7pm	Doreen Bengston RIP
Thursday 4th January	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	Cathy Lyons Birthday Blessings
	St Joseph	12 noon*	Maureen Joslin (Deceased)
Friday 5th January	St John Boste	10am*	Deceased SVP Members
	St Joseph	10am	Veronica & Ray Walkers Family (Deceased Members)
Saturday 6th January Vigil	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Ann Marie Sproston
	St Joseph	5pm*	Paul Bramwell (Deceased)
	St Bede	5pm	Frank Barrett (Well Being)
Sunday 7th January Epiphany of the Lord	St John Boste	9.30am	Syd & Peter McElhenny
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	Ray & John Lyons
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Elizabeth & John Hall & Anne McVeigh

* Indicates Streamed Mass

Readings for The Holy Family

First Reading: Your heir shall be your own flesh and blood

Genesis 15:1-6,21:1-3

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great.' 'My Lord,' Abram replied 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless...'. Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified. The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

Response to the Psalm: He, the Lord, is our God. He remembers His covenant forever .

Second reading: The faith of Abraham and of Sarah

Hebrews 11:8,11-12,17-19

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he

set out without knowing where he was going. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore. It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: *It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on.* He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, Alleluia! At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. Alleluia.

The Gospel: The Presentation in the Temple

Luke 2:22,39-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.



Christmas Wishes



Fr's Martin, Martin, and Luke; Deacons Frank, Tony and Peter would like to thank everyone for their kind wishes, cards and gifts given over Christmas. We wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas, and a safe and holy New Year.

Parish Newsletter - This will be the last edition until Sunday 7th January 2024.

The Annunciation

As we prepare for the birth of Jesus, the final Sunday of Advent always focuses on Mary. What was the young girl Mary doing when the message came? Kneeling in prayer? Feeding the sheep? Fetching water? Sweeping the mud floor? What was she thinking? Engaged to be married, surely about her approaching wedding to Joseph and about the children she would mother. Then came the message which she could accept or refuse, the message on which hung the future of the world: her child would be different from all others. How 'different'? Her thoughts were turned back to the promise to David. It had been read to her so often in the Bible, and now the words echoed in her mind as she listened to the angel say, 'His reign will have no end'. This would all be the work of the Spirit which she had so often heard about in Isaiah: 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you', the Spirit which was to come upon the Servant of the Lord, the Spirit of Emmanuel, 'God with us'. Her young body was to grow, nourish and develop this child. Then she would have the child in her arms to cherish and shape as both Son of God and her own son. What sort of person was Mary? Would you have liked to get to know her? What is God's plan for you?

The Presentation

The story of the Presentation of the child Jesus in the Temple is dominated by Simeon's welcome, 'a light to enlighten the gentiles and the glory of your people Israel', and by his warning to Mary, 'a sword will pierce your heart'. Simeon reiterates the angel's promise that the child would fulfil the destiny of Israel and Israel's task to the nations. Much like any family life, the promised future included the delights of the growing, developing child, and the background fear that the great destiny of each child may include sorrow and even heart-break. How much did Mary and Joseph know about the precious child they were nurturing? As he grew to independence did he become more loving and supportive? How did his contemporaries find him? Was he a leader? Did he stand out from the pack? Each of us has a private picture of Jesus - the child, the boy, the adolescent, the young man. All we know for sure is that 'the child grew to maturity', and that Mary 'pondered all these things in her heart', while keeping in mind Simeon's welcome and warning. What would Mary have felt and thought as she went home from the Temple?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

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Masses are live-streamed daily at 10am everyday, except Monday when Mass is live-streamed at 7pm

Please click the link <https://www.churchservices.tv/penshaw> to view from one of our Churches.

In addition, we live-stream Mass from St Joseph's, Birtley on:

Tuesday at 7pm; Thursday at 12 Noon; Saturday at 5pm.

To access live streaming from St Joseph's Birtley, please click the link <https://www.churchservices.tv/birtley>.

**Note Mass on Christmas Eve will be streamed at 10am, 5pm, 6pm and 11.30pm.
Christmas Day Mass will be streamed at 10am and 10.15am**

"It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going." Like Abraham, we might not know where we are going, but God always has a plan. Is God calling to discern a path to priesthood? **Come and See!** We invite men aged 18+ who might be experiencing the call from God to discern priesthood to join the Vocations Team in finding out more. The next Discernment Evening is on **Tuesday 9th January at St Joseph's Church, Thorneyholme Terrace, Stanley, DH9 0BL between 6.00pm - 8.00pm** There will be a time of Prayer, talk/discussion, followed by a meal together. If you would like to attend, or for more information, Speak to your Parish Priest or contact the Vocations Promoter: 01207 299 012 or [click here](#)

Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible - A Bible Study Course Running for 9 Weeks - Many Catholics want to read the Bible but get bogged down by the long stretches that seem not to make sense or get lost among the sea of Old Testament names and places. Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible, an eight-part Bible study, helps you uncover the story woven throughout Scripture, so you can get the "big picture" of the Bible and understand what it's all about. Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible will help you pick up the Bible with confidence and understand how you fit into God's plan. Our Parish will begin the Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible study on **Thursday 25th January at 7pm in Our Lady Queen of Peace's Hall**. Participants will meet every week to view an engaging video presentation followed by a time of lively group discussion and fellowship. **Please bring a Catholic Bible!** For more information please ring 0191-4163583 or [click here](#).

OLAF - Cancelled until 2nd January 2024

Charity Registration Number: 1143450

Reflections

Diocesan Weekly reflections can be found by [clicking here](#).

Examen - Please follow the links to go to Pray as You Go: [Saturday Examen 4th Sunday of Advent](#)

Catholic Social Teaching

For the Newsletter, [click here](#).

Prayers - If you would like to request prayers from the parish community for someone who is sick, or recently deceased, please click on the links below and complete the necessary forms. This will enable their names to be included in private prayer and during various Masses.

[For Prayers for the Sick](#)

[For Prayers for the Deceased](#)

or ring 0191 4163583

Finance - Standing Order forms and Gift Aid forms are available by clicking on the following links:

[For St John XXIII](#) [For St Joseph's](#)

or ring 0191 4163583.

Sick and Recently Deceased

- To view the sick and recently deceased list [please click here](#).

Parish Newsletter If you have any comments you wish to make about the Parish Newsletter, [please click here](#).

For the latest information, please go to any of the following Websites:

[Parish of St John XXIII](#)

[Parish of St Joseph's](#)

[Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle](#)

All the Links you will ever need!

Please [click here](#) or Scan the QR Code with your mobile phone to go to a site containing **All the Links You'll Ever Need.**



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