

**St. Mary's Catholic Church**  
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**Most Holy Trinity**

*Welcome to Bishop Stephen as he visits us this weekend.*

**Services this week**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Celebration</b>
Saturday 30	6.30pm	Gainford	Most Holy Trinity
Sunday 31	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Most Holy Trinity
Sunday 31	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Trinity Sunday
Monday 1	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	S. Justin Martyr
Tuesday 2	10am	Gainford	<i>Ss. Marcellinus &amp; Peter</i>
Thursday 4	10am	Barnard Castle	<i>Votive</i>
Friday 5	12noon	Gainford (Ord.)	S. Boniface
Friday 5	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 6	4pm	Middleton	Corpus Christi
Saturday 6	6.30pm	Gainford	Corpus Christi
Sunday 7	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Corpus Christi
Sunday 7	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Corpus Christi

**Confessions:** after Mass, by appointment, or Monday 5.30-6pm, Thursday 5.30-6pm, or Saturday 10-11am

**Second collection** the second collection for the Lay Training Fund remains open until 14 June.

**Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 812**

First Reading	<i>Exodus 34:4b-6, -8-9</i>
Responsorial Psalm	<b>To be praised and highly exalted for ever!</b> ( <i>Dan. 3</i> )
Second Reading	<i>2 Corinthians 13:11-14</i>
Gospel Acclamation	<b>Alleluia, alleluia. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, the God who is and who was and who is to come. Alleluia.</b>
Gospel	<i>John 3:16-18</i>

## Rota

This week: Welcome – Wynn; Reader – John

### **S. Justin Martyr, the beginnings of Christian philosophy**

This Monday we celebrate one of the earliest Saints for whom we have an understanding of his conversion to the faith, with many early martyrs we know about their deaths but with S. Justin the story of his becoming Christian is itself fascinating. He was born in the late first century into a family of Greek Romans in what is now Nablus in Palestine; despite being a mere 30 miles from Jerusalem, he seems to have had only the most passing contact with Judaism. He undertook philosophical studies, but found them unsatisfying; moving through different schools none seemed to satisfy a deep yearning within him. He came into contact with a Christian whose witness seemed to him more credible.

This Christian spoke of the prophets as laying the foundation, seeking not their own glory but following only the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He also heard of the witness of the martyrs, their willingness to undergo torture and death for the sake of Christianity spoke to Justin of the truth of Christian claims. He was then baptised and converted to the Faith, seeing it as the true philosophy. (Note here, the word philosophy means love of wisdom.)

Thereafter he set himself up as a teacher and journeyed to Rome when he ran his own school. As well as teaching, he would engage in debates and disputations, after one of these his opponent denounced him to the authorities who arrested him with a group of friends. As they were unwilling to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, they were beheaded.

As well as teaching, he wrote a number of texts, sadly most have been lost to history though some are extant. Perhaps the most significant is his 'First Apology', this is addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius and seeks to argue for an end to persecution by demonstrating that Christians present no threat to the Empire, and that Christian philosophy is entirely reasonable.

Justin speaks of Christ as 'the Word' (*λογος, logos*); as *logos* is the root of 'logic' and the 'ology' suffix of so many words he is presenting him as the origin of philosophical reason. This was a major step in the relationship between Christianity and philosophy, a strong opening argument in a debate which would rumble on for centuries, up to S. John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason). Justin does this not as part of a debate within the Church, but to suggest to the Emperor that there is nothing in Christian teaching which makes it worthy of persecution.

As well as presenting a defence of Christian philosophy, he also provides one of the most detailed accounts of early Christian practice. He describes baptism as the entrance into the Church, and proceeds to a discussion on the Eucharist. He speaks of this as fulfilling Christ's command, and as a means of eating and drinking his flesh and blood. Again, this was written to dispel mistaken ideas which had arisen (one can easily see how language about the Mass suggests cannibalism, for example); but also provides us with concrete information about the Sunday Masses of our predecessors.

As well as this 'First Apology' he also wrote a 'Second Apology' which also sought to defend the Faith against Roman persecution. He also engaged in a dialogue with a Jew named Trypho. In this he presents Christianity as the fulfilment of the Old Testament – this is the longest Christian text from the first 150 years (longer even than the first three Gospels put together).

Justin is not particularly famous for his individual teaching; however, he essentially founded the fields of Christian apologetics and philosophy. His example of reasoning, and his vision of reason as being linking to God's reasonableness can continue to inspire us today. – Fr. Thomas.

**Prayer List:** Among the sick of the parish, please keep John Burgess, Anthony Cole, Norah Mackay, Izzy Herbert, Alice Musto, Diedre and Pat Estall in your prayers. We pray particularly for the recently departed, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time. If you know of others who would like to be added to the parish prayer list, please let Fr. Thomas know.

You may find the following prayer useful as a way of drawing our parish ever closer together round Our Lord. It is through his grace that we are turned from a gathering of people in the same place, into a parish, into a genuine community.

Loving Father, we the people of St Mary's Parish offer ourselves to you, to be your people in this place, to be your Church in our community, and to be instruments of peace, forgiveness and love. Help us grow in gratitude so that we can recognise and thank you for all our blessings.

Instil in us a deep sense of generosity so that we are willing to share our gifts, our talents, our time and our resources. Help us face whatever the future holds and to make new beginnings in your name.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. Amen.

**Monthly giving** As part of making financial matters clear and transparent, from now on we will publish the giving to the parish on a monthly basis (as this allows standing orders to be included).

April 2026: Loose plate (giving at the offertory during Mass) - £536.15

Weekly envelopes and monthly standing orders - £909.67

Total: £1445.82

Many thanks for your generosity.

**First Holy Communion** next Sunday, the great solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, sees our first Holy Communion Mass. Please do keep Gabriela, Katey, Margaret, Raphaël, and Rosalia in your prayers as they make their final preparations for this important step in their relationship with the Lord.

If you have a photograph from your own First Communion, there will be a board to display these next week, so please do bring them along.

### **Message from Bishop Stephen – Pastoral Strategy**

Thank you to all parishes who have completed and returned their reflections as part of our diocesan pastoral strategy. I, together with others, look forward to reading and praying through your discernments in the Spirit.

We next move to a second phase as we invite local parishes to discern together in their partnerships, or with others in their neighbouring area. Information and updates will be shared on our website.

Please keep this discernment in your prayers as we seek to respond to the Lord's call to worship Him and serve our communities in a flourishing and sustainable manner.

**Knit and natter – following Mass on Thursday** a group to spend some time in fellowship together, whilst engaging in knitting, crochet, embroidery...or indeed any other similar craft.

### **Diocesan Pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi**

Led by Bishop Stephen

22nd – 29th October 2027

£1725 per person

Places are limited to 50 pilgrims and places are allocated on a first come first served basis with payment of the deposit securing your place.

The itinerary and booking details can be found on the diocesan website ([www.diocesehn.org.uk](http://www.diocesehn.org.uk)).

### **SVP Camp – Holy Island**

Calling all young adults 18+. Do you have a week to spare to spend on Lindisfarne this Summer helping out at the Holy Island SVP Camp? Volunteers are needed to work alongside the children who stay in the SVP purpose-built centre on the island. Weeks, 3, 5 and 6 of the Summer have 60 children ready to have a great time rock pooling, walking, arts and crafting and enjoying outdoor activities but we need more helpers to ensure they have the best time!

- Week 3 Sat 1st August - 8th August
- Week 5 Sat 15th August - 22nd August
- Week 6 Sat 22nd - 29th August

If you are interested have a look at the website <https://svp.org.uk/microsite/ozanam-camp> or email Barbara Taws [barbarat@svp.org.uk](mailto:barbarat@svp.org.uk)

All helpers receive training and will need to be DBS checked.

**Safeguarding** The Parish operates in accordance with Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and Diocese's policies and procedures at all times. Our Parish Safeguarding Representative is Fiona Bissell or alternatively the Diocesan Safeguarding Team can be contacted on 0191 2433305 or at [safeguarding@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@diocesehn.org.uk)

### **Prayer for England**

As the jubilee year has finished, we return to offering the prayer for the conversion of England at the end of Mass.

O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England, thy Dowry, and upon us all who greatly hope and trust in thee. By thee it was that Jesus, our Saviour and our hope was given unto the world; and He has given thee to us that we might hope still more. Plead for us thy children whom thou didst receive and accept at the foot of the Cross O sorrowful Mother. Intercede for our separated brethren, that with us in the one true fold they may be united to the chief shepherd, the vicar of thy Son. Pray for us all, dear mother, that by faith and fruitful in good works we may all deserve to see and praise God together with thee, in our heavenly home. Amen.