

St. Mary's Catholic Church
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Sixteenth Sunday of the Year

Services this week

Day	Time	Location	Celebration
Saturday 18	6.30pm	Gainford	Sixteenth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 19	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Sixteenth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 19	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Seventh Sunday after Trinity
Monday 20	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	<i>S. Apollinaris</i>
Tuesday 21	10am	Gainford	<i>S. Laurence of Brindisi</i>
Thursday 23	10am	Barnard Castle	S. Bridget of Sweden
Friday 24	12noon	Gainford (Ord.)	<i>S. Sharbel Makhlūf</i>
Friday 24	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 25	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	Seventeenth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 26	9.30am	Gainford	Seventeenth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 26	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Eighth Sunday after Trinity

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

Second collection the second collection for *Stella Maris* (the Church's chaplaincy to sea-farers) remains open this week

Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 105

First Reading	<i>Wisdom 12:13, 16-19</i>
Responsorial Psalm	O Lord, you are good and forgiving. (<i>Ps. 85</i>)
Second Reading	<i>Romans 8:26-27</i>
Gospel Acclamation	Alleluia, alleluia. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, you have revealed the secrets of the kingdom to little children. Alleluia.
Gospel	<i>Matthew 13:24-43</i>

Rota

This week: Welcome – Wynn; Reader – Tom B.

Next week: Welcome – Jane; Reader – Jane; Bidding Prayers – Nuala

S. Bridget of Sweden

For some time, the Church has recognised S. Benedict as the patron of Europe; however, and without any slight to S. Benedict, Pope S. John Paul II was also keenly aware of the large diversity of the continent and so decided to add a series of co-patrons. In 1999 S. Bridget of Sweden, S. Catherine of Siena, and S. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross were given that status. This Thursday is S. Bridget's feast.

Born in 1304 into a noble Swedish family; her father was wealthiest landowners in the country, and her mother was related to the ruling family of the time. As would be expected, she was married at a young age (by modern standards) to a man from another noble family. They had eight children, of whom six survived infancy (one of whom is also recognised as a Saint). During this time her sense of charity was already being recognised, in particular her care for unwed mothers and their children.

This life could easily have continued for many years; however, shortly Bridget and her husband returned from a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, he died. Bridget was 44 at the time, but decided to devote her widowhood to care for others. She joined the Third Order of the Franciscans, seeing this as a way to live a life caring for the poor and sick.

She was not to remain a Franciscan, however. She established a new religious community, now known as the Order of the Most Holy Saviour, or the Bridgettines. The foundation was well-endowed by the King and Queen of the time; however, their rule required that any surplus income be given to the poor, and so there was certainly no hoarding of wealth.

In 1350 Bridget travelled to Rome. This was to gain formal papal recognition for her new order; as well as part of a mission to raise the moral tone of the world at the time. This was during the time when there were rival papal claimants living in Rome and Avignon, and so it took until 1370 to gain the recognition which was the main purpose of the visit. She had not wasted the time, and had already gained a strong reputation for the Bridgettines through their good works in the city. She remained in Rome until her death in 1373 continuing to work with the poor; and increasingly speaking out against abuses and corruptions in the Church.

Throughout her life, she had a number of visionary experiences; several of these involved encounters with Christ on the Cross, as a result of which she placed the Passion of Christ at the centre of her devotions. She was also the origin of some of the familiar elements of the nativity scene; having had a vision in which Our Lady knelt to worship the new-born Christ. She is associated with the devotion known as the 'Fifteen O's' which involves praying 15 Our Fathers, 15 Hail Marys, and a set of prayers each beginning with 'O (e.g., O Jesus Christ, Eternal Sweetness...).

I mentioned at the beginning how S. John Paul II was looking to embrace the diversity of Europe by including additional patrons. S. Bridget 'represents' northern Europe; however, as he included her, he noted her double-life, including beginning as a wife and mother. He was conscious of including among our European patrons somebody to include what he called "ordinary occupations of the life of the laity in the world, and especially to the high

and demanding vocation of forming a Christian family". May S. Bridget pray for all of Europe, but especially those who carry out that 'high and demanding vocation'. – 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, including Kay Green, Angela Williams, and Elizabeth Walsh 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).

Jube 2026: Loose plate (giving at the offertory during Mass) - £831.10

Weekly envelopes and monthly standing orders - £809.67

Total: £1640.77

Many thanks for your generosity.

Children's Space. It is a great joy to see an increasing number of children join us at Mass. Sometimes our younger parishioners do get restless during Mass, to try and help you may have noticed that there's a space at the back of church with some soft furnishings, books, and toys – feel free to take children there during services if you think it would help. "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Church Open Day. We are holding an open day and garden party on Saturday 8 August, 1.30-4pm. Please spread the word and invite anybody who might be interested.

Help needed to serve afternoon tea & refreshments, to welcome visitors, help with children's crafts etc.

To volunteer, please add your name to the list at the back of church or speak with Jane Roberts or Anne-Marie Kelly.

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).

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.

Religious Pendants At the back of church are some religious pendants which Katey and Pip Bolland have made, these are available for a donation (which will go to church funds). Thank you to Katey and Pip for such lovely work and an excellent idea.

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

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.