

**St. Mary's Catholic Church**  
Birch Road, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NR  
**Clergy Fr. Thomas Mason (Parish Priest)**

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## All Saints' Day

### Services this week

| Day         | Time    | Location              | Celebration                              |
|-------------|---------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Saturday 31 | 6.30pm  | Gainford              | ALL SAINTS                               |
| Sunday 1    | 9.30am  | Barnard Castle        | ALL SAINTS                               |
| Sunday 1    | 11.30am | Barnard Castle (Ord.) | ALL SAINTS                               |
| Monday 2    | 10am    | Barnard Castle        | ALL SOULS                                |
| Monday 2    | 12noon  | Gainford              | ALL SOULS                                |
| Monday 2    | 7pm     | Barnard Castle (Ord.) | ALL SOULS                                |
| Tuesday 3   | 10am    | Gainford              | <i>Requiem</i>                           |
| Thursday 5  | 10am    | Barnard Castle        | <i>Requiem</i>                           |
| Friday 6    | 12noon  | Barnard Castle (Ord.) | <i>Requiem</i>                           |
| Friday 6    | 6-7pm   | Barnard Castle        | Holy Hour                                |
| Saturday 7  | 12noon  | Cemetery              | <b>Blessing of the Graves</b>            |
| Saturday 7  | 4pm     | Middleton             | <b>Thirty-Second Sunday of the Year</b>  |
| Saturday 7  | 6.30pm  | Barnard Castle        | <b>Thirty-Second Sunday of the Year</b>  |
| Sunday 8    | 9.30am  | Gainford              | <b>Thirty-Second Sunday of the Year</b>  |
| Sunday 8    | 11.30am | Barnard Castle (Ord.) | <b>Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity</b> |

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

### Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 184

|                    |                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First Reading      | <i>Revelation 7:2-4, 9:14</i>                                                                                                 |
| Responsorial Psalm | <b>Such are the people who seek your face, O LORD. (Ps. 23)</b>                                                               |
| Second Reading     | <i>1 John 3:1-3</i>                                                                                                           |
| Gospel Acclamation | <b>Alleluia, alleluia. Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, says the Lord, and I will give you rest. Alleluia.</b> |
| Gospel             | <i>Matthew 5:1-12a</i>                                                                                                        |

## Rota

This week: Welcomer – Wynn; Reader – Nuala

Next week: Welcomer – Jane; Reader – Jane; Bidding Prayers – Jane

### Month of the Holy Souls - Purgatory

We can't be entirely sure how far back the practice of praying for the departed goes, but it was certainly an accepted reality before the time of Christ. In 2 Maccabees we hear of sacrifices being offered for dead soldiers – they had fallen in battle after carrying a forbidden idol rather than trust entirely in God, prayers were offered that their sin be done away, looking forward to the resurrection (2 *Maccabees* 12). From this we can reasonably assume that Christians have always included the departed in their prayers. Over time, the Church more fully fleshed out the teaching on purgatory and what our prayers do, as we enter into the month of the Holy Souls, it's a good time to pause and reflect on this.

We are told clearly in Scripture that following this life, we have an eternal destiny and that this is either in heaven or hell; but while this final destination is fixed at the moment of our death, in many cases the path to heaven hasn't been completed and so needs to be finished (see Catechism 1022). This 'finishing off' is what happens in purgatory. This is a key point to note, there is a notion one sometimes finds in the popular imagination is that purgatory for those who are not bad enough for hell, but not good enough for heaven. The Church is clear that purgatory is a final purification to be ready for heaven. As the Catechism puts it: "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." (1030).

There are some who die completely prepared for heaven, these are the Saints whom we celebrate today. Some of the Saints have been identified and are venerated by name, but a great many are currently unknown to us on earth. Our aim in life should be to be among them, close to God, and fully prepared and purified by him here so that as soon as we die, we are ready to see him face-to-face (see 1 John 3:2).

But that doesn't mean that if we still have various minor faults we are going to be barred from heaven – that would be far from a message of good news. As we start to embrace God and his goodness we begin a process of sanctification, in which his grace works in us, and we co-operate with it through our good works. That process of sanctification can continue after death, if needed.

In a few points Scripture talks about a purifying or refining fire (e.g., 1 Corinthians 3:15, 1 Peter 1:5), the Church understands this to apply to the purifying of our souls. The image chosen by S. Peter is of gold, when it is first mined this often has various other impurities mixed in with it; but when passed through a furnace those other parts can be burnt off, leaving the pure gold behind. So too, when we sin, we add various other elements to our souls which need to be drawn out and cleansed.

The precise mechanics of purgatory are never really outlined in Scripture, and so the Church does not engage in speculation in her formal teachings. However the central point remains, that purgatory is directed towards heaven – everybody in purgatory will gain the joys of heaven. The other important point is that those in purgatory are still our brothers and sisters in Christ; we are bound together with them in the love of God. Our prayers assist them to

speed through that process of purification, of preparation for heaven. During this month we intensify our prayers for them, especially for those we knew on earth. May the Lord speedily complete their purification, and grant to them eternal rest and peace with him in heaven. – 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, Thomas Savage, and William Evans in your prayers. We pray particularly for the recently departed and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time including John Carroll. 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).

September 2026:      Loose plate (giving at the offertory during Mass) - £665.75

Weekly envelopes and monthly standing orders - £995.67

Total: £1661.42

Many thanks for your generosity.

**November – month of the Holy Souls** As usual, during November we will intensify our prayers for the Holy Souls. All available Masses will be Requiem Masses. There are forms for names to be included in our prayers, these names will rest on the altar during Masses in November; and for lamps to burn for particular individuals/groups during the weeks of November.

**Blessing of the Graves** The blessing of the graves will take place at the Catholic Cemetery on Saturday (7<sup>th</sup> November) at midday. There will be a general blessing of all those buried there, followed by the opportunity for individual blessings if you have loved one resting there. All welcome.

**Second Collection – clergy training.** Next week there will be a second collection for clergy training. As Fr. Thomas' training was funded by the Ordinariate, according to the agreement between the Diocese and Ordinariate, this collection will go to the Ordinariate's clergy training fund.

**First Holy Communion 2027** Application forms are now available for those who would like to be part of the First Holy Communion preparation this year. Preparation will begin later in the autumn, with first reconciliation during Lent, and first Communion around *Corpus Christi*. If you know of any children in Year 4, please do take a form.

**Parish ceilidh 28th November** We will be hosting a Parish Ceilidh on Saturday 28th November at St. Mary's Parish hall, Newgate, Barnard Castle. Doors open 6:15pm, music & dancing from 6:30pm. There will be a shared table, please bring along food to share, with ingredient list re allergies. Bring your own drink and if you wish, cash for the raffle. Family ticket £25, £8 adults, child £5, under 5's free. Tickets will be for sale before and after Masses.

**Contactless Payments** The parish is now able to accept donations by card/contactless. There is a card reader close to the West door, with the option to select donation amount. As always, your generosity is greatly appreciated.

**Men's Group** the first meeting of the men's group is being planned as a ramble around Low and High Force on Saturday 14 November, meeting at church at 11 to share rides up the dale.

**Advent Lunches 2026** Christian Aid Advent Lunches are again taking place at the Parish Hall, Newgate Barnard Castle DL12 8NQ on three consecutive Fridays commencing 27th November, 4th December and 11th December served between 12:00 - 1:30 pm, with arrival by 1.00pm.

This year St Mary's Catholic Church team will be preparing the lunch on Friday 4th December. We have a few volunteers already, but it is always good to welcome new faces and/or familiar faces. The more the merrier to lighten the load. We will need a number of people to make soup but there are also many other jobs you can help with: setting up tables and chairs; serving soup, cheese and biscuits, mince pies and tea and coffee; washing and drying up and, tidying away table and chairs at the end. Please do sign up on the list at the back of church. Thank you. For further information please contact Fiona Cooper: [ftcooper@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ftcooper@hotmail.co.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.

**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.