St. Mary's Catholic Church

Birch Road, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NR
Clergy Fr. Thomas Mason (Parish Priest)

Tel: 01833 631457 | Mobile: 07876 308657
Email: stmary.barnardcastle@diocesehn.org.uk thomas.mason@diocesehn.org.uk
Website: https://www.stmarys-rc-barnardcastle.org

Christ the King

Services this week

Day	Time	Location	Celebration
Saturday 21	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	**CHRIST THE KING**
Sunday 22	9.30am	Gainford	**CHRIST THE KING**
Sunday 22	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	**CHRIST THE KING**
Monday 23	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	*Requiem*
Tuesday 24	10am	Gainford	Ss. Andrew Dung Lac & Comps
Thursday 26	10am	Barnard Castle	*Requiem*
Friday 27	12noon	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	*Requiem*
Friday 27	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 28	6.30pm	Gainford	**First Sunday of Advent**
Sunday 29	9.30am	Barnard Castle	**First Sunday of Advent**
Sunday 29	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	**First Sunday of Advent**
Sunday 29	4pm	Middleton	**Churches Together Vespers**

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

Second Collection – World Youth Sunday. Today is World Youth Sunday, there is a second collection for the church's work with young people, this remains open next week.

Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 158

First Reading	*Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17*
Responsorial Psalm	**The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.** *(Ps. 22)*
Second Reading	*1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28*
Gospel Acclamation	**Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Alleluia.**
Gospel	*Matthew 25:31-46*

Rota

This week: Welcomer – Jane; Reader – Michael

Next week: Welcomer – Wynn; Reader – Fiona; Bidding Prayers –

S. Andrew Dung Lac and his Companions

When we look through the cycle of Saints in the church's calendar, we sometimes come across this way of titling them. In some cases it's because a group was closely associated with a leader; but it's also used because there are cases where there are simply too many people to name individually. This latter case is what we celebrate on Tuesday, the various martyrs in Vietnam; S. Andrew Dung Lac is chosen to personalise them. Most of these 'companions' never met S. Andrew Dung Lac here on earth, but now they all enjoy each others company in heaven.

The current celebration was gathered together by S. John Paul II when he canonised 117 martyrs from Vietnam in 1988. The feast is deliberately ambiguous and it also marks those martyrs who have not been identified and formally recognised by the Church.

The early martyrdoms began in the eighteenth century when European missionaries arrived in Vietnam. These were mostly from the Dominican and Jesuit orders with six from that time being canonised. There was a period of relative toleration and calm during which significant missionary work was done; however, in 1820 a new Emperor (Minh Mang) came to the throne and was opposed to outside influence in the country. This foreign influence included both French involvement (where many of the missionaries originated) as well as Christianity itself which he saw as foreign in a Confucian country. Foreign missionaries were banned, but by this time there was a significant local Catholic population. At first the persecution was at the level of harassment, for example, there were laws requiring people to treat on a wooden cross as an act of disrespect.

The level of persecution rose with executions (including in particularly barbaric fashion) being meted out; this was often preceded by torture to try and get people to recant the Faith. The punishments were often collective, an official would arrive in a village and search for evidence of Christianity; if found the whole village could be punished for sheltering the offending Christians. This was also a source of money for corrupt officials who would know that particular villages were mostly Christian, and accept bribes to look the other way.

Andrew Dung Lac, who was chosen to personalise this whole group, was born in 1795. His family moved to Hanoi when he was young, and he encountered a Christian catechist choosing the new Christian name of 'Andrew' when he was baptised. Ordained a priest in 1823 he won many converts through his preaching and humility of life. He was arrested in 1835, but ransomed by members of the faithful, moving away to seek to evade capture. This succeeded for a few years; however, he was arrested along with Fr. Peter Thi (whom he was visiting for Confession), despite being ransomed again he was seized again before being beheaded on 21 December 1839.

Minh Mang died in 1841 and the persecution gradually wound down. It had been one of the most brutal attempts to extinguish Christianity in particular place. Over the various different persecutions in Vietnam, it has been estimated that at least 130,000 were killed. Several of these were missionaries (the Paris Foreign Missions Society being particularly active), but far more were Vietnamese who had come to the Faith and treasured it and

sought to hand it on to others. As mentioned above, 117 have been individually identified and canonised as martyrs, but they are joined by that larger group whose faithfulness was known to God and so now reign with him in heaven. Today, even with a government which is officially atheist, around 7% of the population is Catholic, all of whom can look to the lives and witness of these martyrs who laid foundations of the Faith in their land. – 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 including Harry Holmes, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including Dave Watson. 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).

October 2026: Loose plate (giving at the offertory during Mass) - £707.90
Weekly envelopes and monthly standing orders - £579.67
Total: £1287.57 Many thanks for your generosity.

Advent Vespers at Middleton. Next Sunday as the fifth Sunday of the month, Upper Teesdale Churches Together has shared worship and it's our turn to host at S. Aidan's. There will be Vespers of the First Sunday of Advent at 4pm, all most welcome.

Christmas Tree. If you would like to contribute to the cost of buying a Christmas Tree for church, there is a collection box at the back. As in previous years, our school children will be making decorations.

Men's Group – Advent Reflection. The next meeting of our men's group will be a reflection for Advent on Saturday meeting in church on Saturday 19 December at 11am.

***Rorate* Mass.** The Ordinariate Group will be celebrating a *Rorate* Mass on Saturday 12 December at 7am. This custom is a votive Mass or Our Lady, celebrated by before dawn by candlelight during Advent – a beautiful devotion to prepare for Christmas. There will be breakfast available after. All most welcome.

School Classes at Mass As a class from school is coming to Mass each Thursday during term, it would be helpful if volunteers were willing to help to walk the children down from school and back again after. Anybody who is willing to help should speak to Leanne Porter.

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.

Flower Arrangements Week by week the church is beautified by flower displays, if anybody would be happy or willing to take on this role in whole or shared with others that would be most welcome.

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.

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

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.