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| **Mass Readings** |
| First Reading | *Isaiah 8:23-9:3* |
| Responsorial Psalm | **The Lord is my light and my help.** *Psalm 26:1, 4, 13-14 response v1* |
| Second Reading | *1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17* |
| Gospel Acclamation | **Alleluia, alleluia! Jesus proclaimed the Good News of the kingdom, and cured all kinds of sickness among the people! Alleluia!** *Matthew 4:23* |
| Gospel | *Matthew 4:12-23* |

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| **Services this week** |
| **Day** | **Time** | **Location** | **Celebration** |
| Saturday 21st | 6.30pm | Barnard Castle | Third Sunday of the Year |
| Sunday 22nd | 9.30am | Gainford | Third Sunday of the Year |
| Sunday 22nd | 11.30am | Gainford (Ord.) | Third Sunday after Epiphany |
| Tuesday 24th | 10am | Gainford | S. Francis de Sales |
| Wednesday 25th | 7pm | Parish Church | Christian Unity service |
| Thursday 26th | 10am | Barnard Castle | Ss. Timothy & Titus |
| Saturday 28th | 6.30pm | Barnard Castle | Fourth Sunday of the Year |
| Sunday 29th | 9.30am | Gainford | Fourth Sunday of the Year |
| Sunday 29th | 11.30am | Gainford (Ord.) | Fourth Sunday after Epiphany |
| **Confessions:** please note that as Fr. Thomas is away during the week, there will be no confessions on Saturday and no Holy Hour on Friday, for this week only. |
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**St. Mary’s Catholic Church**

Birch Road, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NR

**Clergy Fr. Thomas Mason (Parish Priest)**

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**Rota**

This week: Welcomers– Fiona Bissell/Sheila Crabbe; Reader- Jane Roberts; Bidding Prayers; John Crabbe

Next week: Welcomers- Nadia Earl; Reader- Andrew Heron; Bidding Prayers; Leanne Porter

Dear friends,

Today we mark something which is simultaneously new and old – the Sunday of the Word of God. This particular celebration is a relatively new development in the life of the Church, but the idea behind it (the Holy Scriptures) is, of course, centuries old. When he asked us to keep this Sunday with a particular remembrance of the Bible, Pope Francis quoted Saint Jerome (the translator of the Vulgate, the official Latin Bible) who said ‘ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.’

Already by the time of Christ the texts which we now call the ‘Old Testament’ were shown great reverence as containing God’s self-revelation. When Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration alongside Christ they represented (among other things) the law and the prophets, the two great elements of the Old Testament. When faced with Satan’s temptation, Christ responded ‘it is written…’; a phrase which refers back to those writings which would be formalised as the Old Testament. Throughout the Gospels there are references to prophecies, particularly to the ways in which the prophets writing in the Old Testament had given information on what the coming Messiah would be like, and how Our Lord fulfilled those prophecies.

Once the new Church took on the mission of spreading the fulness of God’s message, it didn’t take long until aspects were written down. As he charged across the known world promoting the Faith, S. Paul (whose conversion we celebrate on Wednesday) would write to those communities which he had founded. He would praise their good works, encourage them in their weaknesses, and rebuke them when they had gone astray. His letters form about half of the New Testament. Similarly, Ss. Peter, James, John, and Jude also wrote letters; known as ‘Catholic epistles’ because they were written to the whole Church. The evangelists (Ss. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) wrote accounts of the life and ministry of Christ, based on their own observations (Matthew and John) or the memories of those they worked closely with (Mark and Luke); S. Luke continued with a second history detailing some of the life of the early Church (Acts). Finally, S. John experienced a powerful vision one Sunday afternoon, which closes the series of books with the Revelation or Apocalypse (both words mean the same thing, one being Latin and one Greek).

Each of these 73 books was written by an individual picking up a pen, but more fundamentally the work began with God. We speak of the Bible as being ‘inspired’, the etymology of this means ‘God breathed’ – the biblical writers were open to God and received his words. We do not reverence Galatians because it was written by S. Paul (though anything he wrote would be fascinating), we reverence it because it was God who guided the writing in that case. There were many other writings, both from before Christ and during the infancy of the Church, and so in due course the Church had to discern the will of God; which of these many texts had been inspired, which were simply written in the same form. The current list which Catholics use was settled under Pope S. Damasus in the fourth century.

There is so much to be said about Scripture that it would be impossible to cover it even if I wrote these short columns on the subject for the rest of my life. S. Jerome (quoted by Pope Francis earlier) also said: “the Scriptures are shallow enough for a babe to come and drink without fear of drowning and deep enough for a theologians to swim in without ever touching the bottom.” In these God is speaking to us; telling us the story of how we fell away from him, and how he has been reached out to draw us back ever since; the story of his love for the world; the story of how we can receive that love and share it with the world.

We should all treasure the Scriptures. Reading them frequently, listening when they are proclaimed at Mass, pondering on the words and the meaning behind them. Sometimes we come like S. Jerome’s baby to drink from them; sometimes we feel more ready to be like his theologian who can dive in a swim – what’s important is that we receive them as God’s message to us, with our hearts wide open for that message.

Fr. Thomas.

**Q.R. Code for donations:** As you arrived today you may have noticed a number of Q.R. codes on display. These take you to a donations page for the church, which you may find more convenient than bringing cash or a cheque.

**Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2023:** Can you help the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes next year? We need nurses, healthcare assistants, doctors and volunteers to provide care to the assisted pilgrims who travel with us. Previous helpers have found it is a rewarding and spiritually uplifting week. We plan to travel on Friday 28th July. If you would like to find out more information please email or look at our website <https://www.hexhamandnewcastlelourdespilgrimage.co.uk/> or email lourdes@rcdhn.org.uk

**Prayer List:** Among the sick of the parish, please keep Pat G., Mary Robertson, Pauline Traynor, Alan Connolly, and Anthony Cole in your prayers. Among the recently departed, please pray for the repose of the souls of Brenda Dickinson, Joan Dent and Margaret Markham.

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.

**Shrine Lamps:** We are all familiar with the practice of lighting a votive candle as a means of praying for our various intentions. An old tradition is for people to sponsor a sanctuary lamp which burns for a week. We have six locations where such lamps can burn – in each case the lamp will burn for a week, with a sign by it indicating the intention for which it burns. The main sanctuary lamp is the one in the centre, which indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle; we also have the Lady Chapel, the Martyrs’ Altar; along with the statues of the Sacred Heart, Our Lady, and S. Joseph. If you would like such a lamp to burn, please complete one of the forms at the back or by the side door – indicate where you would like the lamp to burn, which week, and the intention for which you would like it to burn – and then return to Fr. Thomas or stick it through the presbytery letterbox. Each lamp costs £5.

**First Communion:** The parish first communion preparation began recently. Please keep Alfie, Amber, Edward, Robbie, and Tomek in your prayers as they progress towards making this important step in their relationship with Christ; as well as Amelia, Eleanor, and Max who are preparing with them from S. Osmund parish.

**Northern Catholic Calendar and Diocesan Ordo:** Copies of the Northern Catholic Calendar and Diocesan Ordo for this year are available (suggested donation, £3) at the back of church. These provide an annual guide to the various feasts and other observances of the church’s year; the Northern Catholic Calendar also includes the directory for the Diocese.

**School Governors:** The Diocese is adopting a new model for the recruitment of school governors, rather than dealing with individual vacancies it will be seeking to build up a pool a potential governors who can be appointed easily when a suitable vacancy occurs. There will be more details coming out shortly to encourage people to join this pool of governors; however, in the meantime please do reflect on whether this is a way in which you feel that you could help the Church and her mission.

**Crib Collection:** As in previous years, there is a crib collection taken for the work of ‘Mission Together’ which is the children’s branch of the Papal Mission Charity ‘Missio’. The crib remains in place as a place of prayer and devotion until 2 February, during that time please be generous towards the charity.

**Christian Unity week:** We are in the midst of the week of prayer for Christian Unity which continues until Wednesday 25th (the Feast of the Conversion of S. Paul). There will be an œcumenical service at S. Mary’s Church of England church on Wednesday 25th at 7pm, all are encouraged to attend and pray for our greater unity as Christians.