

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

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## First Sunday of Lent

### Services this week

Day	Time	Location	Celebration
Saturday 21	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	First Sunday of Lent
Sunday 22	9.30am	Gainford	First Sunday of Lent
Sunday 22	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	First Sunday in Lent
Monday 23	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	<i>Lenten feria</i>
Tuesday 24	10am	Gainford	<i>Lenten feria</i>
Thursday 26	10am	Barnard Castle	<i>Lenten feria (followed by Stations of the Cross)</i>
Friday 27	12noon	Gainford (Ord.)	<i>Ember Day</i>
Friday 27	5.30pm	Barnard Castle	Stations of the Cross
Friday 27	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 28	6.30pm	Gainford	Second Sunday of Lent
Sunday 1	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Second Sunday of Lent
Sunday 1	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	First Sunday in Lent

### Please note – no Confessions this Thursday

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

**Mass at Barnard Castle next Sunday morning, no Mass on Saturday evening**

### Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 151

First Reading	<i>Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7</i>
Responsorial Psalm	<b>Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned. (Ps. 50)</b>
Second Reading	<i>Romans 5:12-19</i>
Gospel Acclamation	<b>Glory and praise to you, O Christ. One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. Glory and praise to you, O Christ.</b>
Gospel	<i>Matthew 4:1-11</i>

## Rota

This week: Welcome –; Reader – Jane

Next week: Welcome – Wynn; Reader – Michael L; Bidding Prayers – John

### Happy 400<sup>th</sup> Birthday to S. Peter's Rome

During the week an announcement was made that S. Peter's Basilica was launching a number of initiative to help celebrate its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary later this year. Without doubt it is one of the most famous churches in the world, and barely a visitor to Rome – whether tourist or pilgrim – would imagine not visiting. I'm sure that many of you will have been there, I well remember being able to celebrate Mass there when visiting Rome a few months after my ordination.

Its fame has a number of causes, which reflect the long history of the papacy to which it is intimately linked. That said, it should be noted that it is not the cathedral of Rome; the Pope has his throne (cathedra) as Bishop of Rome in S. John Lateran. S. Peter's begins its life as a shrine built over the tomb of S. Peter – naturally this leads to a close connexion with the Papacy. The first church was built immediately after the conversion of Constantine; the site was known to the local Christians who had kept a place of pilgrimage and devotion throughout the years of persecution. The opportunity to pay respects at the tomb of S. Peter made it a major pilgrim site, and consequently very wealthy; as it was outside the ancient walls of the city, this wealth made it a target for raiders.

By the end of the middle ages, these raids as well as a general deterioration with age caused Pope Nicholas V to plan some renovations. At first these were planned to repair and improve the earlier building, but soon the plan was to replace the old church with an entirely new building. The project took many years to complete, Nicholas' plans began in the mid fifteenth century, but the new church wasn't consecrated until 1626.

The main architectural work was done by Donato Bramante, Michelangelo, and Carlo Maderno, and stands out as one of the great pinnacles of the Renaissance. Inside, the focus is clearly on the main altar; the famous canopy rising over it draws attention from throughout the building. Naturally the altar is the focus in any Catholic Church, but in this case, this also draws attention to the shrine underneath the altar, where the tomb of S. Peter can be found. Even outside the church this is the focus thanks to the 139 feet diameter dome which towers over the city.

Its façade is similarly famous, being used as the place to proclaim the election of each new Pope to the crowds gathered in the square below as well as to viewers across the world in more recent times. The square itself has colonnades which were designed to represent the arms of mother Church reaching out to embrace her children. Until the twentieth century, the square was enclosed on all sides; but the Italian government cleared a wide road (*Via della Conciliazione*) leading up to the square to celebrate the agreement in which the Church recognised the Italian state, which in turn recognised the independence of the Vatican.

Whilst it is unquestionably one of the greatest artistic triumphs in the world, it has to be remembered that this is a working church; each day Mass is offered, and numerous prayers are offered up within its walls – the beauty of the building is fitting, but only ever points towards the deeper beauty of the prayers and sacraments celebrated within it.

When S. Peter was crucified in Rome, he could have had no idea that the very place in which he died would become such a focus, still less a place of such grandeur. But even when generations of Roman Christians prayed there secretly in fear of persecution, they were laying the foundations on which later Christian built. – 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, and David Brown in your prayers. We pray particularly for the recently departed including David Walkden, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including Fr. John Caden. 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.

**Stations of the Cross** – during the Stations will be prayed on Fridays at 5.30, followed by Holy Hour; and following Mass on Thursdays.

**The Road to Emmaus** during Lent, following Mass on Fridays, the Ordinariate Group will be having some reflections on the ways that Christ fulfils Old Testament prophecies. "Beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (S. Luke 24:27) All most welcome.

**Lent Lunches** will take place on three Fridays during Lent (13, 20, and 27 March), 12-1.30pm at the Parish Hall on Newgate. We are responsible for providing the meal, as well as serving, clearing up &c., on Friday 13 March – a sign-up list for volunteers is at the back of church. All welcome.

**Pastoral Strategy** In Bishop Stephen's Pastoral Letter read at all this weekend's Masses, we heard about God's calling for our Diocese. The hopes and challenges we all face in the coming years. All parishes are asked to reflect and discern on their mission as we continue our journey to live as a flourishing Diocese alive in the Holy Spirit.

More information is available via [www.diocesehn.org.uk](http://www.diocesehn.org.uk) including details for an online session taking place on Tuesday 3rd March at 7pm.

**Children's Liturgy.** Now that we have a suitable venue, we are looking to offer a children's liturgy during Sunday Mass. A meeting will take place on Monday at 2pm to being preparation – any volunteers who are willing to help are most welcome.

**Youth2000** Holy hour, Saturday 28 February, 2-3pm followed by social time after. St Cuthbert's Church, Durham, DH1 3HL. Theme – 'this is my beloved Son.'

**Our Outstanding School** as some of you may already know, S. Mary's School recently had a visit from the Catholic Schools Inspectorate – this focuses on the Catholic life provided by the school rather than pure education. The school was rated as Outstanding in all three areas (Catholic life and mission; Religious education; and Collective worship). The report begins: "St Mary's Catholic Primary School has a warm and welcoming atmosphere, deeply rooted

in its Catholic identity and mission, which is proudly proclaimed and enthusiastically lived by everyone." This wonderful outcome is the result of incredible hard work by the whole team – congratulations to everybody. As always, please do keep this important part of our parish in your prayers.

**Holy Island SVP Summer Camps 2026** Applications are now open for children in school Years 5-7 for Holy Island Summer Camps. The children spend a week in our centre on the island over the Summer holidays. Transport takes the children from Tyneside to our residential centre and all meals, accommodation and activities are included in the cost. For more information please visit our website: Holy Island SVP Vinnies Camp <https://svp.org.uk/microsite/ozanam-camp>

**Do you have some spare time on your hands and want a fulfilling volunteer role?** Our residential centre on Holy Island needs volunteers in 2026. There are lots of roles: Working with the children on our Vinnies Summer Camps, during the Summer holidays as a caretaker, kitchen assistants, cooks, and volunteering to work directly with the children. It's hard work, but so much fun and very worthwhile! No cost, just your time and patience for an interesting week on this beautiful island! Or perhaps you are retired or have flexible holidays and could give some time to help at our Term Time Camps. We need people who can take on a caretaking role or help in the kitchen with serving meals, cooking or operating the dishwasher! These Camps allow hundreds of children from the Diocese and further afield have a great residential holiday in our centre.

Guaranteed hard work but fantastic memories too!

To join our fabulous team or find out more information about any of the roles and to volunteer, please visit our website: Holy Island SVP Vinnies Camp <https://svp.org.uk/microsite/ozanam-camp> or contact [BarbaraT@svp.org.uk](mailto:BarbaraT@svp.org.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](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.