

St. Mary's Catholic Church
Birch Road, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NR
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Fifth Sunday of Lent

Services this week

Day	Time	Location	Celebration
Saturday 21	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	Fifth Sunday of Lent
Sunday 22	9.30am	Gainford	Fifth Sunday of Lent
Sunday 22	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Passion Sunday
Monday 23	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	<i>Lenten feria</i>
Tuesday 24	10am	Gainford	<i>Lenten feria</i>
Wednesday 25	10am	Gainford	ANNUNCIATION
Thursday 26	10am	Barnard Castle	<i>Lenten feria</i>
Friday 27	12noon	Gainford (Ord.)	S. Mary in Passiontide
Friday 27	5.30pm	Barnard Castle	Stations of the Cross
Friday 27	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 28	4pm	Middleton	Palm Sunday
Saturday 28	6.30pm	Gainford	Palm Sunday
Sunday 29	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Palm Sunday
Sunday 29	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Palm Sunday

Confessions: after Mass, by appointment, or Monday 5.30-6pm, Saturday 10-11
N.B., no confessions this Thursday

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

Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 170

First Reading	<i>Ezekiel 37:12-14</i>
Responsorial Psalm	With the LORD there is mercy, in him is plentiful redemption. (Ps. 129)
Second Reading	<i>Romans 8:8-11</i>
Gospel Acclamation	Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God. I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord. Everyone who believes in me shall never die. Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.
Gospel	<i>John 11:1-45</i>

Rota

This week: Welcome – Jane; Reader – Jane

Next week: Welcome – Wynn; Reader –; Bidding Prayers – Owls Class

Lady Day, the Annunciation of the Lord

There are relatively few weekday celebrations at the moment, usually Saints are celebrated on the day of their death (i.e., their heavenly birthday), but the Church tries to keep Lent clear of other elements. This Wednesday, however, we meet a celebration which is both far too important to ignore as well as impossible to even think about moving – the Annunciation. This is the feast which celebrates the moment when Gabriel brought the message of Christ to Our Lady, and therefore the moment of the Incarnation. It doesn't take an extraordinary knowledge of biology to know that this is going to be nine months before Christmas when we celebrate Christ's birth.

The story of the Annunciation is well known to us all with the biblical account (Luke 1:26ff) being read as part of Christmas celebrations each year. At that moment the whole plan of our salvation paused while Our Lady gave her response. Due his foreknowledge, God was aware that she would consent to the conception of Christ in her womb, but in time there was a moment however brief when everything hung in the balance. We all now know that she did consent, and everything else could follow from her profound words 'be it unto my according to your word.'

As well as being familiar from the biblical story, it has long been a subject of sacred art with numerous images having been produced of the Archangel approaching Our Lady; often with the dove descending on her to symbolise the Holy Spirit coming down.

The historical fact of the Annunciation has always been held; however, the pattern of feasts through the year took some time to develop. We do not know the precise history of the feast as they are too early for clear evidence to have survived. By the sixth century it was well established, being celebrated throughout the whole Church, for that degree of observance it must have begun long before then. It appears that the date is not derived from that of Christmas, but rather the other way round.

By around the year 200 it was reckoned that the date for the crucifixion was 25 March, finding this date involves matching together the lunar calendar used by Jews (and therefore used to date the Passover) with the solar calendar used by the Roman (and passed on to us). At this time there was a widely held belief that great figures had a certain perfection of life by living for a precise number of years – unsurprisingly this view was applied to Christ and if he died on 25 March he had to begin his life on 25 March. This leads naturally to the date of Christmas on 25 December, it also ties into the feast of the Nativity of S. John the Baptist on 24 June (six months before Christ's birth, in line with S. Luke's Gospel).

This feast naturally became one of the most important, it marks the beginning of Christ's work on earth, the moment when God and man were united in Christ. With the move to date years from the coming of Christ, it was also a widespread choice for new years day. England kept this practice until 1752, indeed there is still a remnant with the tax year beginning on 5 April which was the equivalent to 25 March when we switched to the Gregorian calendar. S. John Paul II called for it to be marked as a day for the unborn, as it marked that phase in Christ's life when he was fully human but not yet born.

As we keep this feast, we recall the great work of Christ in coming to be among us. We recall too Our Lady's response to the invitation to bear the Son, and we seek to imitate her in always saying 'yes' to God's plans. – 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 David Brown, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including Eugene Coyle. 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.

Church Cleaning volunteers will be gathering on Monday and Tuesday of this week at 10am for church cleaning. All are most welcome to come and assist to prepare our Church for the Easter celebrations – many hands make light work.

Easter Services – a sheet with the times of Easter services is at the back of church, please feel free to take a copy. As usual, the main services of the Sacred Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil) will be joint with S. Osmund's and the Ordinariate; this year they take place here at Barnard Castle.

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

To assist with our reflections, the children at school have prepared a new set of stations to replace the ones which were becoming a little tatty. Thank you to everybody who helped to produce these, I'm sure that they will help to deepen our experience of Lent each year.

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. All welcome.

Thank you to everybody who helped with the lunch Friday 13, this was a great success raising £245 for Christian Aid.

Knit and natter – a group to spend some time in fellowship together, whilst engaging in knitting, crochet, embroidery...or indeed any other similar craft. The first meeting following the church cleaning on Tuesday morning, all most welcome.

Diocesan Pastoral Strategy Following Bishop Stephen's recent pastoral letter (printed copies at the back of church if you haven't got one), we are in a period of discernment as a

parish regarding our mission and how best to fulfil it. If you weren't here last week, please take a copy of the handout, this is also available on the website, and take the time to reflect on our shared future. Written feedback is invited through the post-in board at the back of church (including reading and reflecting on others' comments); or through the dedicated e-mail address stmarysfuture@gmail.com In person feedback to members of the P.P.C., or in a couple of meeting details to be confirmed shortly.

The diocese also has material to assist with discernment on its web-site, including a webinar which took place recently and is open to all. <https://diocesehn.org.uk/pastoral-strategy/>

Children's Liturgy. As noted recently, we are preparing to offer a children's liturgy during Sunday Mass. Volunteers are most welcome to help with, if you are interested please speak to Fiona Bissell. Those who have already expressed a willingness will be contacted regarding D.B.S. checks.

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.