

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

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**Third Sunday of Easter**

**Services this week**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Celebration</b>
Saturday 18	6.30pm	Gainford	Third Sunday of Easter
Sunday 19	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Third Sunday of Easter
Sunday 19	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Third Sunday of Easter
Sunday 19	4.30pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour for the Dignity of Life
Monday 20	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	<i>Easter feria</i>
Tuesday 21	10am	Gainford	<i>S. Anselm</i>
Thursday 23	10am	Barnard Castle	<b>S. GEORGE</b>
Thursday 23	7pm	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	<b>S. GEORGE</b>
Friday 24	12noon	Gainford (Ord.)	<i>S. Adalbert</i>
Friday 24	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 25	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	Fourth Sunday of Easter
Sunday 26	9.30am	Gainford	Fourth Sunday of Easter
Sunday 26	11.30am	Gainford (Ord.)	Fourth Sunday of Easter

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

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

**Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 258**

First Reading	<i>Acts 2:14, 22-33</i>
Responsorial Psalm	<b>O Lord, you will show me the path of life. (Ps. 15)</b>
Second Reading	<i>1 Peter 1:17-21</i>
Gospel Acclamation	<b>Alleluia, alleluia. Lord Jesus, open the Scriptures to us; make our hearts burn within us when you speak to us. Alleluia.</b>
Gospel	<i>Luke 24:13-35</i>

## Rota

This week: Welcome – Wyn; Reader – Jane

Next week: Welcome –; Reader – Sheila; Bidding Prayers – John

### **Delving into the Scripture – Judith**

As a seminarian each morning would, naturally, begin in the chapel; following morning prayers as we left a natural custom had developed of the large majority pausing for a moment in front of the main statue of Our Lady. This is a large statue with an equally large pedestal supporting it – the two are designed together with the lower part including several images from the Old Testament which point forwards to Our Lady. One of these was of Judith, the figure named in the title of one of the books of the Old Testament.

Judith is one of the deuterocanonical books, not recognised by protestants as part of the Scriptures, but accepted by Catholics and the Orthodox. Its text comes to us from the Greek version of the Old Testament, though there is some evidence that there may have been an earlier Hebrew or Aramaic text which is now lost.

The book relates a set of historical events, though it is not history in the modern sense. It is written to include a large amount of symbolism, and potentially mythology. Its purpose is not so much to give information about the past, as to offer an account of God's care and protection of his people.

As we would expect from a book which has a person's name as its title, the central character (apart from God) is Judith. She is a beautiful widow, her beauty is presented as connected with her great trust in God. Both are used as she saves the Kingdom of Judea from invasion. The book opens with an invasion of the kingdom. Over seven chapters the story relates the power of Nebuchadnezzar's army headed by his general Holofernes; this invading army causes great fear among the people who turn in prayer to God for protection. The action centres on a town referred to as Bethulia, this is probably another name for Shechem, and critically lies on the road towards Jerusalem – if Bethulia is captured, then the route to the capital would lie open making a successful invasion far more likely.

A knowledge of God's protection of his people is present, with one of Holofernes' commanders retelling of how in previous times the God of Israel won victory. Needless to say, this does not go down well with Holofernes who proceeds to lay siege to Bethulia.

Judith is a resident of the city, and faithfully trusts in God. She prays fervently, but also conceives of a plan in which she manages to get into the enemy camp and to meet with Holofernes. She charms him, and then when he has drunk too much in a banquet and has fallen asleep she kills him and takes his head back to Bethulia. Having lost their leader, the invaders scatter; at the same time the defenders rally having had their courage strengthened. Judith is highly praised, but directs all of that praise to God, and ends her life living content and serving God.

Though it relates a somewhat grizzly tale, the heart of the story is of trust in God, and of seeking to work with his plans. There is also a powerful reminder of the dignity of women, not by abandoning their womanhood but embracing it; because of this, the Church has often seen Judith as pointing forwards to Our Lady, who supremely trusted in the workings of God. There is also a call to humility connected with that trust in God, who uses those who humbly trust in him. May we all seek to work with God's plans through our trust in him. – 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, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including Pope Francis and Chris Kelly. 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.

**New Rota** Please note that there is a new rota covering the weekends up until the end of August. Please do sign up generously to act as welcomer, reader, bidding prayer writer, and refreshment server. If you have not done so before but are interested, please speak to Jane or Fr. Thomas for further information.

**Holy Hour for the Dignity of Life** The Bishops of England & Wales have announced that they will be holding a holy hour to pray for the dignity of human life on Sunday 19 April, beginning at 4.30pm. They have invited parishes and all of the faithful to join with them. We will be keeping this holy hour here at Barnard Castle – please do come if you are able, and to pray for this important intention whether you are in church or not.

**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.

**Knitted Bible exhibition** will take place at the Methodist Church from Friday (24<sup>th</sup>) to Wednesday (29<sup>th</sup>), entrance is free. For times please see the poster at the back of church.

**Diocesan Pastoral Strategy** Thank you to everybody who contributed to the discernment process for the Diocesan Pastoral Strategy. The P.P.C. is now finalising the parish's return, which is due to be submitted later this week; once completed it will be made public for all members of the parish to read. It includes a number of initiatives to allow us to build our parish, so please be ready to consider your involvement with these as they arise.

**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](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.