

St. Mary's Catholic Church
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Assumption of Our Lady

Services this week

Day	Time	Location	Celebration
Saturday 15	6.30pm	Gainford	ASSUMPTION
Sunday 16	9.30am	Barnard Castle	ASSUMPTION
Sunday 16	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	ASSUMPTION
Monday 17	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	<i>Votive</i>
Tuesday 18	10am	Gainford	<i>Votive</i>
Thursday 20	10am	Barnard Castle	S. Bernard
Friday 21	12noon	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	S. Pius X
Friday 21	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 22	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	Twenty-First Sunday of the Year
Sunday 23	9.30am	Gainford	Twenty-First Sunday of the Year
Sunday 23	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

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

Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 178

First Reading	<i>Revelation 11:19a, 12:1-6a, 10ab</i>
Responsorial Psalm	On your right stands the queen in gold of Ophir (<i>Ps. 44</i>)
Second Reading	<i>1 Corinthians 15:20-27</i>
Gospel Acclamation	Alleluia, alleluia. Mary has been taken up into heaven; the host of angels rejoice. Alleluia.
Gospel	<i>Luke 1:39-56</i>

Rota

This week: Welcome – Wynn; Reader – Nuala

Next week: Welcome –; Reader – Fiona C.; Bidding Prayers – Nuala

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God (Ps. 18)

I'm sure that many of you took the time to see the partial eclipse last Wednesday, and whilst it wasn't a theological event per se, it can spark some interesting reflections. We were all taught the basic mechanics of the solar system in school, but it is easy to forget the magnitude of what this all means. In the case of the eclipse it means that the sun (which is about 865,000 across and is 93 million miles away) was blocked out by the moon (about 2000 miles across and 240,000 miles away). These are all sizes which are impossible for us to comprehend, but yet these immense objects lines up perfectly.

If we take matters further, this gathering around our sun is itself rather small within a galaxy of over 100 billion stars...and then at least 2 trillion galaxies (to type the numbers out that's 2,000,000,000,000) in the universe. All of this incomprehensible size has to give us a sense of wonder – if we look at the night sky, we are able to see a small fraction of those as their light finally makes its way to earth millions upon millions of miles away. But yet, each of these stars was brought about precisely because God created the universe in the way that he did; each one of those 2 trillion galaxies is known by him.

Coming back to our solar system, that sun is shining down on us as it has been for about 4 ½ billion years (and is expected to continue for the next 5 billion years). If it suddenly disappeared we would all die out very rapidly as the world became simultaneously dark and colder than we can imagine. Our earth moves around it, turning every 24 hours, according to this incredible force called gravity. We usually notice it when we drop something, but it's the same force which makes that dropped object fall to the ground which keeps the earth and the sun together – giving us heat and light. Again, we can wonder at the precision, we are close enough to be given warmth and light by the sun; but not so close that we get burnt up.

Going back to the eclipse, here in England we didn't get the drama of the complete eclipse where the whole of the sun is blocked out. From video footage, we can readily see why many former civilisations with less knowledge of the workings of the universe took it as a great portent. We did get a somewhat eerie feel as the strength of the sun lessened over time – it was up there, but somehow seemed less powerful. There was still plenty of light, one could sit and read a book for example, but it was also clearly different from normal.

The mechanics of how all of this happened are fascinating, the different objects being pulled around (over all of those thousands of thousands of miles) and casting a shadow. But they can also remind us that behind all of this was the mind of God. When he created the universe he laid down things like the law of gravity...and did so knowing that it would produce a solar system with the earth in it; knowing that it would produce wonders like eclipses.

When we look at our natural world, we can and should see the hand of God. Whether at the scale of trillions of galaxies; or in the movement of the sun, the moon, and the earth; or in the tiniest details here on earth, or in our own lives. God holds all of these in his mind and in his care. We do well to wonder, as the psalm says "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." – 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 Tom Ball and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time. 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).

July 2026: Loose plate (giving at the offertory during Mass) - £744.46

Weekly envelopes and monthly standing orders - £799.67

Total: £1544.13

Many thanks for your generosity.

Second Collection – next week we will have the annual collection for the Holy Places. This supports the Church's work in the Holy Land, caring for some of the most profound sites in Christendom. It will remain open on the weekend of 29/30 August.

New Rota There is a new rota for welcomers, readers, bidding prayer writers, and refreshment organisers. Please do be generous in signing up for these different ways of helping with Sunday Mass. If you have any questions about what it involves, please speak to Fr. Thomas or to Jane Roberts.

Children's Space. It is a great joy to see an increasing number of children join us at Mass. Sometimes our younger parishioners do get restless during Mass, to try and help you may have noticed that there's a space at the back of church with some soft furnishings, books, and toys – feel free to take children there during services if you think it would help. "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Children's Liturgy In September we will be beginning to offer children's liturgy during Sunday morning Masses. This will be during the first part of Mass, and offer teaching to them at a level more appropriate for their age; then they will come and join the rest of us for the second half of Mass. It will be for children in primary school. Further details will be provided closer to the time.

Ordinariate Masses some restoration work will be taking place at Gainford, and scaffolding will mean that the church is temporarily out of action. During this time the Ordinariate Masses (Sunday 11.30 and Friday 12) will be celebrated here at Barnard Castle.

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi Led by Bishop Stephen

22nd – 29th October 2027 £1725 per person

Places are limited to 50 pilgrims and places are allocated on a first come first served basis with payment of the deposit securing your place.

The itinerary and booking details can be found on the diocesan website (www.diocesehn.org.uk).

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.

Organ Recital Thursday 20 August, 7pm at Barnard Castle Methodist Church. Norwegian organist, Victoria Ulriksen, free entry (donations welcome, to be shared between the organist and the church restoration appeal). Doors open at 6.30pm followed by refreshments.

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.