

St. Mary's Catholic Church
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Twenty-Fourth Sunday of the Year

Services this week

Day	Time	Location	Celebration
Saturday 12	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	Twenty-Fourth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 13	9.30am	Gainford	Twenty-Fourth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 13	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity
Monday 14	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	Holy Cross Day
Tuesday 15	10am	Gainford	Our Lady of Sorrows
Thursday 17	10am	Barnard Castle	<i>S. Hildegard of Bingen</i>
Friday 18	12noon	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	Ember Day
Friday 18	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 19	6.30pm	Gainford	Twenty-Fifth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 20	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Twenty-Fifth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 20	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

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

Special Collection – There is a second collection today for the work of Catholic Education

Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 128

First Reading	<i>Sirach 27:30-28:7</i>
Responsorial Psalm	The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in mercy. (Ps. 102)
Second Reading	<i>Romans 14:7-9</i>
Gospel Acclamation	Alleluia, alleluia. A new commandment I give to you, says the Lord, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Alleluia.
Gospel	<i>Matthew 18:21-35</i>

Rota

This week: Welcomer –; Reader – Michael

Next week: Welcomer –; Reader – Andrew; Bidding Prayers – John

Our Lady of Sorrows

This Tuesday we celebrate Our Lady of Sorrows, a celebration which has varied somewhat over the years, but also reaches right back to the very beginnings of Christianity (a mere 40 days after Our Lord's birth). It is also a celebration with one of the richest sets of devotions attached to it, clearly something about it speaks very clearly to our hearts.

The origins of the devotion are scriptural, when Our Lord was presented in the Temple, as part of the rituals following his birth (which we celebrate at Candlemass in February) he was recognised as the Messiah by a devout man called Simeon. He not only noted Our Lord, but prophesied the sorrows which Our Lady would suffer. "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (*Luke 2:34-35*) This line gives rise to the many devotional images of Our Lady which show one or more swords piercing her heart.

As we might imagine, given the basis in Scripture, devotion to these metaphorical swords piercing Our Lady became widespread through the Church. Eastern Orthodoxy has a particular ikon known as 'the Softening of Evil Hearts' which depicts Our Lady with swords in her heart. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a famous dialogue which gives a dialogue between Christ and his mother, in which she speaks of the various sorrows which she experienced.

The Western (Catholic) tradition came to a semi-formal recognition of Seven Sorrows, which reflect various moments in Our Lord's life which involved Our Lady, and her motherly sadness at seeing the pains of her Son. These are: the prophecy of Simeon (mentioned above); the flight into Egypt to avoid Herod's massacre (*Matthew 2*); losing the child Jesus in the temple when he was 12 (*Luke 2*); meeting with Our Lord on his journey to Calvary (hinted at in *Luke 23:27* and the fourth station of the cross); the Crucifixion (especially *John 19:25-27*); taking Our Lord's body down from the Cross; the burial of Our Lord.

In each of these we see that Our Lady's sorrows arise from her close relationship with Christ. As always with our devotion to Our Lady, she is pointing us closer to Christ; in particular as he suffers for us, she suffers with him. We also see her presence throughout Christ's work on earth – obviously she is present at his birth, and the sorrows begin almost immediately; but she is also present at the end, standing at the foot of the Cross as he dies for the redemption of the world.

This is a very human devotion, and so can speak deeply to our heart. All of the mothers among you will know how much a child's pain hurts you; and this is magnified with Our Lady. Unsurprisingly it has inspired much devotion in the life of the Church. There is a variant of the rosary, known as the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows or the Servite Rosary (the Servite Order being particular devoted to the Sorrows) which meditates on these sorrows. There is also a well-known hymn which reflects on the sorrows – the *Stabat Mater* (At the Cross her Station Keeping) – often sung during the stations of the cross.

These devotions remind us of the presence of Our Lady throughout Christ's ministry, they can also be a comfort in our own sorrows – just as Our Lady suffered, and then received the most powerful consolation in the Resurrection, so too, if we unite our sufferings to those of the Lord, then they can be used by God for our salvation and that of the whole world. – 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 Thomas Savage in your prayers. We pray particularly for the recently departed, including Tom Ball and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including Bishop Arthur Riddell (born in Barnard Castle). 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).

August 2026: Loose plate (giving at the offertory during Mass) - £939.92

Weekly envelopes and monthly standing orders - £834.67

Total: £1774.59

Many thanks for your generosity.

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.

Parish WhatsApp group "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up..." 1 *Thessalonians* 5:11 A Parish WhatsApp group is to be set up to allow Parishioners the opportunity to share and encourage one another in their faith. To share events, prayer petitions, news, reflections, etc, to build up our Parish community in a beneficial and positive way. If you wish to join, please add your name & mobile number to the list at the back of church or speak to Anne-Marie Kelly. Thank you!

Assisted Suicide. We give thanks that the House of Commons has defeated the attempt to introduce assisted suicide – among those voting against this proposal was our own M.P., Dr. Sam Rushworth, thank you to him for this. We continue to pray that all recognise and uphold the dignity of human life, and especially that the best possible palliative care is available to all.

Children's Liturgy Today we have our first session of children's liturgy. This will now take place when Mass is on Sunday mornings. 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 is for children in primary school. Please take children directly to the garden room from 9:20 onwards (they will be safely escorted back into church during Mass).

Saint Vincent de Paul Society. The month of September is SVP awareness month. The St Vincent De Paul Society (or as it is known – the SVP) is an international Catholic voluntary organisation dedicated to tackling poverty by providing practical assistance to those in need – irrespective of faith, age or gender in other words Turning concern into action. The Society is a lay organisation initially formed in Paris in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam and active in England & Wales since 1844. It was inspired by St Vincent De Paul a 17th century priest in Paris, famed for his works with the poor. Over the month of September, we will highlight our work and the initiatives we have started. We are also holding an open meeting on 19th October in the St Augustine's Parish Centre, and all are welcome. We will remind you of this date nearer the time.

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.

Second Collection – Home Missions. Next week is Home Mission Sunday, and there will be a second collection for this work.

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.