

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

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Twenty-Eighth Sunday of the Year

Services this week

Day	Time	Location	Celebration
Saturday 10	6.30pm	Barnard Castle	Twenty-Eighth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 11	9.30am	Gainford	Twenty-Eighth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 11	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	Nineteen Sunday after Trinity
Sunday 11	5pm	Barnard Castle	October Devotions
Monday 12	6.15pm	Barnard Castle (Lat.)	S. Wilfrid
Tuesday 13	10am	Gainford	<i>S. Edward the Confessor</i>
Thursday 15	10am	Barnard Castle	S. Teresa of Avila
Friday 16	12noon	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	<i>S. Margaret Mary Alacoque</i>
Friday 16	6-7pm	Barnard Castle	Holy Hour
Saturday 17	6.30pm	Gainford	Twenty-Ninth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 18	9.30am	Barnard Castle	Twenty-Ninth Sunday of the Year
Sunday 18	11.30am	Barnard Castle (Ord.)	Twentieth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday 18	5pm	Barnard Castle	October Devotions

Confessions: after Mass, by appointment, or Saturday 10-11am
Please note, as Fr. Thomas is away, no confessions on Monday or Thursday

Mass Readings – Parish Mass Book, page 140

First Reading	<i>Isaiah 25:6-10a</i>
Responsorial Psalm	In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for length of days unending. (Ps. 22)
Second Reading	<i>Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20</i>
Gospel Acclamation	Alleluia, alleluia. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, enlighten the eyes of our hearts, so that we may know the hope to which he has called us. Alleluia.
Gospel	<i>Matthew 22:1-14</i>

Rota

This week: Welcomer –; Reader – Nuala

Next week: Welcomer – Wynn; Reader – John; Bidding Prayers – Jane

I was in prison and you visited me – S. Matthew 25:36

Today the Church marks Prisoners' Sunday, and so take the time to remind us that visiting (or otherwise supporting) those imprisoned is one of the works of mercy which we are all encouraged to undertake. Seeking to care for those in prison, and those affected by imprisonment has always been part of the Church's ministry, and will always remain so.

It should be said that this isn't a commentary on public policy, still less is it seeking to undermine the justice system. It is entirely legitimate for the state to punish those who have done wrong, and this legitimately includes confining criminals to prison for a period of time (even for the rest of their lives in some cases). It is also not a suggestion that prison has to be made 'soft'. The precise details of justice policy are points on which Catholics (like all people) can have a whole variety of legitimate views. However, one point which we can never ignore is that all people (including prisoners) are made in the image and likeness of God, and therefore their dignity needs to be upheld even in the midst of their punishment. As a seminarian I spent a year visiting a young offenders institute each week as part of my pastoral formation; it was powerful to meet with young men in that situation. I wasn't told what crime any of them had committed, but given that they were typically serving sentences between 5 and 10 years, this was just some petty theft. But yet, they were still God's children, beloved by him. An institution like a prison is often rather dehumanising, but their weekly meeting with a chaplain and a visiting priest was a moment when they could be treated just as a person.

It was also clear that one of the greatest challenges was relations with their families. In several cases they had children, as well as partners on the outside. These were significantly affected by the imprisonment even though they had nothing to do with the crimes committed. Supporting prisoners in their attempts to retain contact with their families is vital if they are to re-enter society well at the end of their sentences. One of the members of the Catholic chaplaincy there was a permanent deacon who was married with children (albeit now grown up), he was able to offer sessions in how to be a father, covering all practicalities including how to change a nappy. If a released prisoner can go on to be a good father, then the chance of his children becoming offenders is dramatically reduced.

But there were also many signs of the troubles faced. Levels of literacy were very low, partially this was due to a lack of engagement at school; but also a number of specific learning difficulties which hadn't been identified or catered for at school. Despite many attempts at security drugs were clearly a constant issue on the wings. At least one prisoner had very visible marks from a history of self-harming. The prison system finds itself overwhelmed and unable to provide effective solutions to these problems.

Our concern is also, indeed primarily, spiritual. Many prisoners are Catholics and so can be encouraged through access to the sacraments, and support in our prayers. In prison there is often a strong pressure over religious matters, it becomes a tribal identity and many find heavy pressure to convert to other religions.

We do not for a moment deny the necessity of punishment for crimes, nor of the primary importance of care for the victims of crime; but the very words of Christ command us to care for the outcast, including the prisoner. Today, but also throughout the year, let our prayers and practical support be there for prisoners and their families. There is a significant Catholic ministry to prisons – PACT, the Prison Advice and Care Trust – which has Archbishop Richard Moth of Westminster as its President. Their website includes information on we can provide that spiritual support: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk>

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 Brother Michael Delmer and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time including Edna Dignan, Mary Ann Kean, John Bowes, Valerie Holmes. 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).

September 2026: Loose plate (giving at the offertory during Mass) - £665.75

Weekly envelopes and monthly standing orders - £995.67

Total: £1661.42

Many thanks for your generosity.

October Devotions as we enter into the month of October during the week, the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary, we will be having October Devotions (Rosary and Benediction) on the Sundays of October at 5pm.

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!

First Holy Communion 2027 Application forms are now available for those who would like to be part of the First Holy Communion preparation this year. Preparation will begin later

in the autumn, with first reconciliation during Lent, and first Communion around *Corpus Christi*. If you know of any children in Year 4, please do take a form.

Centenary Group The sharp eyed among you, may have noticed that the foundation stone (just outside the West Doors) was solemnly laid on 30 October 1926, this was followed by the building of the church, with its solemn consecration on 29 September 1928. As such we are fast approaching our centenary. A group to organise various celebrations is being gathered – if you would be willing to be involved, please let Fr. Thomas know.

Contactless Payments The parish is now able to accept donations by card/contactless. There is a card reader close to the West door, with the option to select donation amount. As always, your generosity is greatly appreciated.

World Mission Sunday Next Sunday is World Mission Sunday, there will be a second collection for the work of *Missio*.

Gift Aid A big thank you to those who recently signed up to gift aid their weekly offerings or monthly standing orders. However, judging by the amount of cash received that is still not in the little blue gift aid envelopes, I fear we could be losing out on a significant amount of money, which the parish desperately needs to support Fr. Thomas and everything that goes on here at St Mary's. If you are a tax payer, then gift aiding your donations allows us to claim from HMRC, 25% in lieu of the tax you have paid. That means that for every £10 you give, we get an extra £2.50. Great for the parish and IT WON'T COST YOU A PENNY!

So please see Fiona Cooper or myself, Andrew Heron, and we will help you complete a one-off form. Let's make the most of everything that we can. Thank you. Andrew

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.

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.