



# parish newsletter

12 December 2021 | Third Sunday of Advent (C)

## Reflecting on the Gospel



### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." - Lk 3:16

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1979 CCC

"From silly devotions and sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us!" St. Teresa of Avila

We've all heard the adage, "Laughter is the best medicine." In many ways, it really is. When was the last time you really laughed? The gift of imagination allows us to see possible things that are yet to be. Imagine a world filled with laughter. We take life too seriously sometimes. Fear, uncertainty, pressure, negativity, disappointment, and myriad other human experiences can rob us of the joy needed for laughter. God never promised us an easy road, and we do have to take the course of our

lives seriously. However, there is a balance to be sought and a possible joy that can be brought even to the darkest and most challenging of encounters.

St. Therese of Lisieux reminds us that, "Joy is not found in the material objects surrounding us but in the inner recesses of the soul. One can possess joy in a prison cell as well as in a palace." Falling in love with God, who is present in all of creation, allows us to bring a depth of understanding to everything we do and experience. We can more easily see above and beyond things while pursuing the only One who can truly sat-

isfy our hearts. When we realise that God, the king of Israel, is in our midst and with us, there is no further misfortune to fear. We can celebrate the wonder and beauty of God's gift of joy. It is no wonder that many saints radiate joy and have no reservations expressing laughter. They are happy because they have found a pearl of great price.

We celebrate with joy today with hearts filled with expectation, wonder, awe, and beauty as we ready ourselves, even more excitedly, for the coming of our Saviour. Do not fear and do not be discouraged. If you haven't laughed in a

while, why? Something is preventing you from expressing the magnificence of your soul and the presence of God who dwells within. God's power and presence within us assures us that we are loved and kept in that presence. What more is really needed? Rejoice and laugh in the presence of God! It really is the best medicine and a most perfect way to convince others that God is really with us. "Go ahead, laugh! Live your life with joy and serve the Lord with laughter! Joy, with peace, is the sister of charity. Serve the Lord with laughter." (St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina)

## Everyday Stewardship

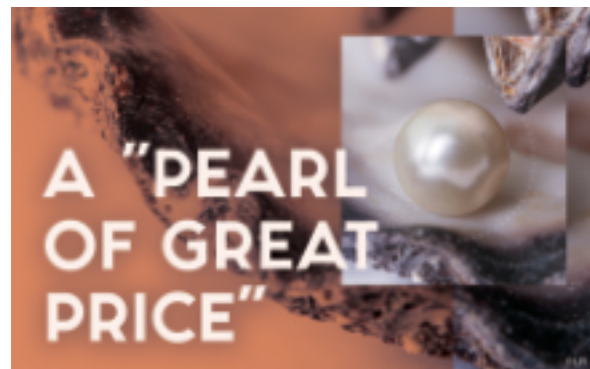
Recognise God in your everyday moments

Depending on how your mood is today, the words of Paul will hit you differently. "Rejoice always," he tells us. Well, if your football team is poised to win this weekend

or next, maybe you're really feeling this vibe. But if you've got a long slog at work ahead of you this week and a to-do list that only seems to grow and never shrink, it may make you grumble. "Rejoice always? Always? When I'm tired? Cranky? When I'm sick of doing and giving? Thanks, Paul. I'll be sure to scribble that phrase on a Post-It and

stick it to my dashboard for when some entitled punk inevitably cuts me off on tomorrow's morning commute."

When we feel this way, we know it's time to head back to the well. Think of all the places in Scripture where God compares His love, His mercy, His salvation to water. And not just any water — living water, water that moves. God's strength is not a stagnant puddle sure to evaporate and disappear. It's water you can keep coming back to. It's water that never dries



up.

Which is good news for us, because we never stop failing to do what we should, never stop failing to feel the joy and the compassion and the selflessness we are called to. We need a source of living water if we are going to 'rejoice always'.

To be everyday stewards, we need a well that never empties.

The fountain of salvation never dries up. There is always more there for us to draw from. It's a sign of His commitment — so let us, in turn, be committed to Him.

## Parish Mission Statement

Please take time this week to pray with our Draft Parish Mission Statement. We've put a guide below as a suggestion to help you listen to what God is saying to you.

When you've prayed, please take a few moments to fill in one of the forms at the back of the church or online at [sunderlandcatholic.com](http://sunderlandcatholic.com).

I find 10 mins where I can be alone to pray undisturbed.

I settle myself down... become still ... come to quiet before God. I let God love me as I am, right now ...

I listen as Jesus speaks these words to me:

'I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last.' [Jn 15:16]

I might repeat these words a few times so I can

### Draft Parish Mission Statement

Our Lady of Mercy Parish is formed of the Catholic communities of St Cecilia's and St Patrick's Church, St Mary's Church, the Sisters of Mercy, St Mary's RC Primary School, St Anthony's Girls Catholic Academy, St Aidan's Catholic Academy and the Sunderland University Catholic Chaplaincy.

Jesus Christ unites and inspires us through his Word and the sacraments to share the good news with the people of Sunderland. Together with others working for the common good, we welcome everyone in a spirit of friendship and service so that all people may know God's love.

really hear Jesus speaking to me.

With God, I remember all the different communities of our parish: the people and places. I sit and think about our Parish Mission statement below. I notice what I like about it ... what I don't like about it ... how it speaks personally to me of

my ways of sharing in our parish Mission in my daily life ... or what might be missing ...

I talk with the Lord about whatever is on my heart from this time of prayer. I end my prayer with a sign of the cross.

### Advent & Christmas 2021

12 December - Carol Service at St Mary's 2:30 pm

18 December - Songbird's Concert at St Mary's, 7 pm

21, 22, 23 December - Three Days of Mercy 1-7 pm in the Mercy Chapel

A priest will be available for confession on the hour, every hour from 1pm until 7pm.

24 December - Christmas Eve

7 pm - Mass of Christmas Night at St Cecilia's  
7 pm - Mass of Christmas Night at St Mary's

25 December - Christmas Day

10 am - Mass of Christmas Day at St Mary's

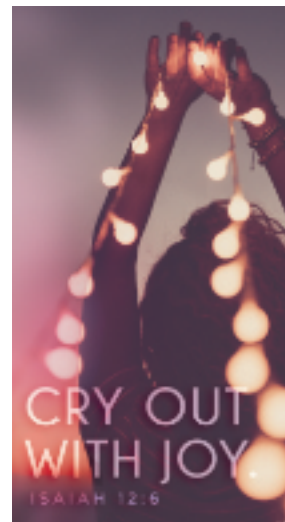
26 December - Holy Family

10.30 am - Mass at St Mary's  
10.30 am - Mass at St Cecilia's

See the [sunderlandcatholic.com](http://sunderlandcatholic.com) for more details.

## Live the Liturgy

Shout for joy! When was the last time you ever felt like doing that? Fear, uncertainty, pressure, negativity, disappointment, and myriad other human experiences can rob us of joy. We can never predict what life will bring. As unsettling as that can often seem, life's unpredictability is also the very thing that allows it to be exciting and adventure-some! We know that life can be difficult, and it is unrealistic to expect it to be otherwise. God never promised an easy road. But, when a person truly falls in love with God and discovers the



peacefulness and assurance of God's presence, then a depth of understanding will be brought to everything

they do and experience. Nothing will be able to rob them of joy! When we realise that God, the King of Israel, is in our midst and with us, there is no further misfortune to fear. We celebrate the beauty and wonder of God's gift of joy today as we ready ourselves, even more excitedly, for the coming of our Saviour. Do not fear and do not be discouraged. There is a power and presence within us, our God, who has made us, who loves us and who will keep us. What more do we need? Rejoice!





# This Week

12	<b>THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C)</b>	<i>Zep 3:14-18a/Is12:2-3, 4, 5-6 [6]/Phil 4:4-7/Lk 3:10-18</i> 10:30 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's Stella Close (RIP) 14:30 <b>Carol Service</b> St Mary's 17:00 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's People of the Parish
13	Monday St Lucy	<i>Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a/Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9 [4]/Mt 21:23-27</i> 08:00 <b>Breakfast with God</b> St Mary's 12:05 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's George & Neil Brown (RIP) 18:30 <b>Alpha</b> St Mary's Catholic Centre 20:00 <b>Prayer Group</b> St Cecilia's Hall
14	Tuesday St John of the Cross	<i>Zep 3:1-2, 9-13/Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23 [7a]/Mt 21:28-32</i> 12:05 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's Ints of Kay & T. McFarlane 12:45 <b>Over 60s</b> St Mary's Catholic Centre 16:00 <b>Confirmation Class</b> St Mary's Catholic Centre
15	Wednesday	<i>Is 45:6b-8, 18, 21c-25/Ps 85:9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14 [Is 45:8]/Lk 7:18b-23</i> 12:05 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's Liam Corbett (anniv)(RIP)
16	Thursday	<i>Is 54:1-10/Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a, and 13b [2a]/Lk 7:24-30</i> 10:00 <b>Confessions</b> St Cecilia's 10:30 <b>Open House</b> St Mary's Catholic Centre 10:30 <b>Mass</b> St Cecilia's Baby Emily (RIP) & the Chapman Family 12:05 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's Ints of Maura Bowler & Family
17	Friday	<i>Gn 49:2, 8-10/Ps 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17 [cf. 7]/Mt 1:1-17</i> 12:05 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's Mary Kelly (RIP) 18:00 <b>Evening with Jesus &amp; Friends</b> St Mary's
18	Saturday	<i>Jer 23:5-8/Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19 [cf. 7]/Mt 1:18-25</i> 10:15 <b>Confessions</b> St Mary's 11:00 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's Michael Warren (RIP) 11:45 <b>Confessions</b> St Mary's 12:00 <b>RCIA</b> St Mary's Catholic Centre 18:00 <b>Vigil Mass</b> St Cecilia's Dec'd Members of McConville Family
19	<b>FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C)</b>	<i>Mi 5:1-4a/Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 [4]/Heb 10:5-10/Lk 1:39-45</i> 10:30 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's Margaret Eccleston (RIP) 17:00 <b>Mass</b> St Mary's People of the Parish

## Announcements

### Covid-19 Regulations

Like everyone else, we're looking carefully at the recent developments with the new variant. As a reminder, everyone needs to wear a mask in church unless exempt and we should all be careful at keeping our distance and sanitising. If regulations change we'll let you know, at the moment, though, we're proceeding cautiously with our Advent and Christmas plans.

### Confessions

We're holding 3 Days of Mercy again on 21, 22 and 23 December. A priest will be in the Mercy Chapel on the hour, every hour between 1 pm and 7 pm. He'll stay as long as there are people for confession then come back at the top of the next hour.

In addition to the normal opportunities for confession, this is an extra 21 hours over three days!

### Children's Liturgy needs more helpers

Can you help with children's liturgy on Sunday mornings? We're limited to 8 children for every adult and we're almost at our capacity. We're not asking for volunteers because Jesus never did: we're asking for ministers who can give their time and their talents so that God's children can hear his word and grow in his love. You'll need to do a safeguarding check, but we'll help you with that. Can this be your Christmas gift to Jesus this year?



### Carol Service 2.30pm today.

Join us for a traditional Carol Service in St Mary's at 2.30pm this afternoon.

There'll be Benediction, readings from scripture and loads of Christmas Carols. There's also special activities for children in the Mercy Chapel. Afterwards, please join us for mulled wine and mince pies in the parish hall.

### New Chaplain

Welcome to Rebecca Leighton our new Chaplain to the University of Sunderland! We're really pleased Rebecca has joined the pastoral team and we wish her every blessing in her new ministry!



Fr Christopher Hancock MHM JCD, Parish Priest • christopher@sunderlandcatholic.com  
Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHM, Assistant Priest • emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk  
Fr Philip Amek Adede MHM, Assistant Priest • philip.adede@diocesehn.org.uk  
Rev Eddy Barker, Parish Deacon  
Canon Alexander Barrass, Priest in Residence

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**St Mary's Church •** 27 Bridge Street • Sunderland • SR1 1TQ •  
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**First Reading:**  
For God will show all the earth your splendour: you will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship. (Bar 5:4)

**Psalm:**  
What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad. (Ps 125)

**Second Reading:**  
And this is my prayer: that

your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. (Phil 1:9-

10)  
**Gospel Acclamation**  
Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!

**Gospel:**  
The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Mk 7:37)



and Norman, the sick sisters at Oaklea, David, Marion, Dave, Neil, Paul, Andrew, Jacob, David, Alisa, Susan, Clare. Mick



Let us know if you would like a name added to our prayer list.

Bernadette, Jean Maureen, Christopher, Paula, Peter, Emilia, Jean, Teresa, Cath and Norman, the sick sisters at Oaklea, David, Marion, Dave, Neil, Paul, Andrew, Jacob, David, Alisa, Susan, Clare. Mick  
Thomas Russell, Matt Jackson, Mary Cooke, Stella Chaytor

## Why do we do that?



**Question:** What is holy water and how do I explain the reason that it is placed at the entrances of churches to my non-Catholic friends?.

**Answer:** Holy water is a

sacramental, a reminder of the life of the Church expressed and celebrated through the sacraments. God's grace is mediated through word and gesture (the outward signs). This comes to us through Jesus (instituted by Christ) as he entrusts to the Church his saving mission (to give grace). In turn the Church, through the sacraments,

## Questions for the Week

**First Reading:** The words of the prophet Zephaniah focus on hope for a new beginning of the Lord's presence in their midst. How has the season of Advent thus far brought you spiritual renewal?  
**Second Reading:** As his letter draws to a close, Paul encourages the Philippians to be a community that

rejoices in the Lord. How would you rate your own spiritual happiness?  
**Gospel:** John the Baptist exhorted the crowds, tax collectors, and soldiers to live a moral and other-centred life within the parameters of their day-to-day work. What would this look like for you in your current station in life?

shares that grace and mission with us.

On Ash Wednesday, we receive ashes on our foreheads to remind us of our origins, humbly created from the dust. But by blessing ourselves with holy water, we are reminded of our destiny! We are baptised sons and daughters of God. This is also a call to conversion, to live more fully our baptismal call to live as disciples of Jesus. We see holy

water whenever we renew our baptismal promises.

This will occur during the Easter liturgy as well, reminding us that we are indeed on a journey of faith and renewed in Christ. Blessing ourselves with holy water reminds us that we are baptised into a community faith, and always in need of turning from sin and toward God. Holy water is a visible sign of our baptism!

## Saint of the Week



### St. Lucy | Feast Day December 13

A name that means "light," St. Lucy (283 – 304) is the patron saint of those blind or suffering with eye trouble. Not much is known about her life, except that she was determined to remain a virgin and thus refused marriage. History tells the story of a frustrated suitor who eventually accused St. Lucy of being a Christian (a crime at the time), and she was executed in Syracuse, Sicily, in the year 304.

Today, we celebrate a

number of traditions that incorporate symbolic meaning of St. Lucy as the "bearer" of light in the darkness of winter. This is particularly seen in Scandinavian countries, with their long dark winters. There, a young girl dressed in a white dress

and a red sash (as the symbol of martyrdom) carries palms and wears a crown or wreath of candles on her head. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, girls dressed as Lucy carry rolls and cookies in procession as songs are sung.



## Flock Notes

In August last year I climbed Yr Wyddfa, a mountain in North Wales, known in English as Snowdon. It was a beautiful clear day, but also one of the hottest. The path to the summit is well trodden and clearly marked, and there were plenty of other people making the climb. The going was quite rough and steep in places, so I spent much of the ascent looking down at my feet, trying not to fall or stumble in a rock, as were most other climbers by the look of it.

Half way up, a genius of an entrepreneur has built a small cafe called The Halfway Cafe. (There's also one at the top as well!) I'm sure there is some ancient Welsh law that requires climbers to stop, so in obedience, my climbing partner and I did.

Even though you're only half-way up, the view all around is breathtaking. From that point we could see in the distance Llanberis, the starting point for our trek. It was amazing to see how far we'd walked and how much elevation we'd gained. Walking with your eyes down on the path immediately ahead means you lose all sense of distance.

The other thing you can see from the cafe is the summit,

and from there you get a sense of just how far—both in distance and elevation—that awaits. However, stopping to rest a while halfway along, realising how far we'd already come gave us a burst of confidence and energy to finish the trek, even if the worst was still to come. (Be warned, the section from halfway to three-quarters along the Llanberis Path to the summit is brutal!)

The purple of Advent softens to rose today, as we pass the half-way point on our journey to Christmas. We're not there yet, and there's still some way to go. If Advent is like climbing Yr Wyddfa, today is that point on the journey, about half way along when you stop to catch your breath and admire the view. When we're in the middle of a journey it can be hard to appreciate just how far we've come—not until we stop and look behind us.

That's the gift of today: a chance to catch our breath and give thanks to God for bringing us safe this far on our Advent journey. It is also a chance to glance ahead and see what still waits us. Above all though, today is a day to take literally the opening words of the Mass and 'Rejoice!'



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