



Parish Handbook



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.

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Welcome

Our Lady of Mercy parish is the Catholic Community at the heart of Sunderland City. That means we are in a privileged place to witness to the love of Christ in this city.

The first way we witness to Christ is by our gathering each weekend to celebrate the Eucharist: the source and summit of our Christian life. We listen to the scriptures and break bread in faithful obedience to Jesus' command to 'do this in memory of me.' Our weekly gathering, as well as our weekday gathering for the Eucharist offers many opportunities for us to minister to each other in the name of Christ.

The other way we witness to Christ is by reaching out to the people of this city who find themselves in some kind of need: the sick, the housebound, the lonely and the homeless. Our service witnesses to our love of Christ and is a gentle invitation to them to put their faith and trust in Christ as well.

In this booklet we have assembled all the different ministries in our parish, all the opportunities that parishioners have to make concrete their discipleship of Jesus Christ. Of course this list is not exhaustive or static: as our parish grows under the guidance of the Holy Spirit new ways of ministry are revealed to us.

In the gospel Jesus never asked for volunteers. He called individuals to follow him as a member of a community and to take on specific tasks in that community. Likewise he does not ask any of our parishioners to volunteer for any of these ministries. He calls and invites. As you read through this booklet, ask yourself, 'What ministry is Jesus calling me to fulfil?'

Fr Christopher

Parish Ministries

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

John 12:26

At our baptism Jesus called us by name and invited us to follow him by imitating his life of servant leadership. The life of a Christian is marked by living out that call to service of others in the activities of daily living.

Serving in a ministry is not primarily about what we do for God, rather it is about giving God permission to use us so that he can serve his people. In the same way that Mary gave her consent to God so that Jesus would take flesh in her womb, ministers give consent to God so that their hands become God's hands and the voices become God's voices.

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

St Teresa of Avila

Serving is an obligation that touches the Christian's identity as a person reborn into the image of Christ at Baptism. Serving also benefits the well-being of the minister. When we offer service we not only grow in our capacity to love, but we find a particular joy and peace and we build new relationships and form community. Serving is good for you!

We are blessed in Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Sunderland, to have so many different opportunities for service. Have a read through the following pages and as you read, ask if God is asking you to serve him and in his people.

Prayer

“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.

Philippians 1:3-5

The first responsibility for each parishioner at Our Lady of Mercy is to pray for the parish, for their fellow parishioners and for the City of Sunderland. Everything we do as individuals and as a parish needs to begin with prayer, be sustained by prayer and brought to completion with prayer.

In prayer we raise our hearts and minds to God and place before him the wellbeing of our parish, all that we are and all that we do. Every ministry our parish engages in is built upon a foundation of prayer and we all share in the obligation to build that foundation.

Prayer for our parish takes two main forms: private and public prayer. In our daily, private prayers we are encouraged to bring before God the parish and its needs. We might offer a decade of the rosary, pray a psalm or read a passage of scripture and offer it up for Our Lady of Mercy Parish. The Mercy Chapel is open daily for everyone to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament and to light a candle.

Public prayer is offered when we attend Mass and celebrate the sacraments. The Eucharist is the source and the summit of our parish life and our weekly participation in it builds up our parish and makes us grow as the Body of Christ. We also share in the Church's public prayer when we attend Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross or other public devotions.

Safeguarding



Take care that you do not despise any one of these little ones, for I tell you their angels continually see the face of my Father in Heaven.

Matthew 18:10

Providing a safe environment for children, vulnerable adults and others is not only a legal and moral obligation, but a spiritual obligation that falls to every member of the parish community. By virtue of our baptism we have all assumed the responsibility for making sure our parish community and our ministries and activities are characterised by mutual respect and a desire to attain the highest standards in safeguarding. While the parish clergy, safeguarding representatives and others take on this responsibility in a particular way, the words of Jesus above remind us all of our need to look for the wellbeing of each other—especially the most needy and vulnerable members of our community. Safeguarding policies and procedures are also designed to protect individuals who serve in the name of the church and empower them to serve with love and confidence.

In all our parish ministries and activities we implement fully the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. As a result of this, some of the ministries mentioned below will require ministers to have a current DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check before they are allowed to minister and/or undergo special safeguarding training. There is no cost involved to the parishioner and one of the parish safeguarding representatives will help guide you through the process. If you have any questions about this please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Safeguarding Representatives whose details are on the parish website and our church notice boards. You can also speak with any of the parish clergy or with the safeguarding office for the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle.

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, do not delay in contacting the police, using 999 if a child or adult is believed to be in immediate danger.

It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. Please refer allegations directly to the police and also to the Diocesan safeguarding office by tel: 0191 243 3305 or by email: safeguarding@diocesehn.org.uk. You can also contact the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency by telephoning 0207 901 1920 or via email: admin@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk.

The details of our parish safeguarding representatives are available on the parish website at <https://sunderlandcatholic.com/safeguarding>

Hospitality

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hebrews 13:2

In the gospels, whenever anyone comes to Jesus they are welcomed. The hospitality ministries in the parish allow parishioners and visitors to feel that same welcome when they enter our churches and attend our events.

There are many opportunities to serve in different hospitality ministries in Our Lady of Mercy Parish, both at St Mary's and at St Cecilia's.

Stewards & Welcomers

“It is most seemly in the eyes of the whole world that the stranger should be received with honour; that the charm of hospitality should not fail at our table; that we should meet a guest with ready and free service, and look out for his arrival.

Saint Ambrose of Milan

Stewards and welcomers greet people at the doors of the church and make sure that parishioners and visitors alike feel welcomed to God's house. Stewards help with queries and keep an eye out to make sure everyone is safe. They help out at the offertory procession, communion and whenever the congregation needs to move.

Our church buildings on earth are a symbol and a foretaste of God's house in heaven where we will be welcomed for all eternity. In this way, the welcome stewards and welcomers give to parishioners and guests is a reflection of the welcome we will receive in heaven.

Environment

“And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:10

Environment ministers make sure that God's house is kept clean and tidy and that the environment is warm and welcoming. They help set up and tidy up after big celebrations. Their work is more than merely cleaning our churches. Environment ministers care for the dignity and beauty of God's house on earth. Additionally, their care for hygiene means that people can enter and use our churches safely and with confidence.

Flowers

“And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Matthew 6:28-29

Flower arrangers ensure the sanctuary and other places are suitably adorned with flower arrangements that enhance the beauty of the church. At the important liturgical feasts such as Christmas and Easter, the flower arrangers' displays enhance people's celebration of the feast.

Maintenance, Health & Safety

“In the first year of his reign, King Cyrus issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices are offered and burnt offerings are brought; its height shall be sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits.

Ezra 6:3

The work of maintaining the churches and parish properties is never ending. The maintenance team checks fire alarms and smoke detectors and ensure the properties conform to health and safety standards. They also replace broken lights and perform other minor repairs that need to

be done, generally keeping an eye out for whatever's broken and in need of repair.

For the churches to open safely, several health and safety checks must be made, some annually, some monthly. Maintenance and health & safety ministers make sure the parish's buildings are safe and conform to all the necessary standards.

The team also looks after the car park, gardens and other outdoor spaces of the parish, making sure that from the street the churches are tidy and well presented. This team does various activities such as gardening and litter picking.

Piety Stall

Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

Proverbs 17:16

The church piety stalls sell Christian cards, gifts, rosaries, statues, bibles and books. The people who minister at the stalls are responsible for checking and ordering stock. And helping parishioners find what they are looking for. The piety stall also stocks booklets from the CTS explaining the essentials of the Catholic faith.

Liturgy & Music

“The liturgy then is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In it full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.

Second Vatican Council

It is when the parish gathers for the celebration of the Eucharist that we most resemble the members of the Body of Christ what we have become in our Baptism. All the ministries in our parish flow from and feed into our celebration of Mass since the Eucharist is the 'source and summit' of the Christian life.

The liturgical ministries and ministers enhance our celebration and enable us to encounter Christ more deeply as he comes to us in his word proclaimed for us, in the sacrament of his body and blood on the altar, in the priest chosen to lead the celebration and in the hearts of all the faithful gather to worship.

Readers

“The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Christ is present in his word, since it is he who speaks to his people when the scriptures are proclaimed in church. In the same way extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist share the body and blood of Christ with the

faithful, the readers share the Word of God with their brothers and sisters. The reader allows Christ to speak to his people by offering to him their voice so that Christ's words may be heard.

Readers proclaim the first reading, the responsorial psalm and the gospel acclamation. On Sundays and certain feasts, they also proclaim the second reading and part of the bidding prayers.

Altar Servers

“You shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the covenant, and over all its equipment, and over all that belongs to it; they are to carry the tabernacle and all its equipment, and they shall tend it, and shall camp around the tabernacle.

Numbers 1:50

Altar servers assist the priest and deacon with the celebration of the Mass and other liturgical celebrations. They carry the cross, candles, incense and books and through their ministry provide dignity to and help with the smooth running of liturgies. Altar servers also help at weddings and funerals.

Anyone can be an altar server: female or male, young or old. Adults will need to have a special safeguarding check before they can serve in this ministry.

Sacristans

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

Matthew 6:19

Sacristans work behind the scenes preparing the sacred vessels and the sacred vestments for the celebration of Mass and for the other liturgical celebrations. They make sure the churches are stocked with everything needed for the celebration of Mass and also look after the altar candles and the sanctuary lamp that burns before the tabernacle. Sacristans wash and iron the altar cloths, purificators, corporals and other cloths used in the celebration of Mass and the sacraments.

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes

1 Corinthians 11:26

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion assist the priest and deacon in distributing the Body and the Blood of Christ at Mass; to the sick at home and in the hospitals; and to the housebound. Whether at Mass or in other special situations, the extraordinary ministers of holy communion enable the recipient to share the Communion of the entire Body of Christ, the Church, and share in the effects of the abiding Communion of love of the God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Children's Liturgy

“Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

Matthew 19:14

Jesus told his disciples to let the little children come to him and not to hinder them. The catechists at children's liturgy fulfil this command in a particular way by preparing liturgies for our youngest members that opens to them the treasures of the Word of God in a way that is appealing and understandable to them.

Children's liturgy is normally held at the Saturday Vigil Mass in St Cecilia's at 6pm and the Sunday Morning Mass in St Mary's at 10.30am. Catechists require a special safeguarding check before they can work with children.

Music

“The one who sings prays well.

St Augustine of Hippo

The psalms urge us to praise God with music, on instruments and with our voices. Music raises our hearts and minds to God in prayer and helps form us into a community of prayer and praise. Music enhances our liturgies by setting the tone for the celebration and inviting the participation of everyone, regardless of musical ability.

Musicians

“David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their kindred as the singers to play on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise loud sounds of joy.

1 Chronicles 15:16

The Old Testament speaks of musicians praising God with their skill and the Church has continued to use musical instruments to enhance liturgical worship throughout its history. While the organ has been used in Catholic Churches for many centuries, other instruments reflect the diversity of peoples and cultures called to form the one People of God.

Parishioners who can play instruments are encouraged to use their skills for public worship on weekends and the major feast days of the church's calendar.

Choirs

“Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wonderful works.

1 Chronicles 16:9

The Book of Psalms is the Bible's hymn book. Jesus and his disciples would have known and sung the psalms, as they did on the night of the Last Supper. Choir members use their voices not only to praise God, but to help and encourage the whole congregation to lift up their voices to the Lord.

The parish's choirs sing at the weekend Masses and at the major celebrations.

Outreach & Evangelisation

“Jesus came and said to the disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

A parish cannot exist in isolation and it cannot be solely concerned with caring for those who turn up on a Sunday or at the weekday Masses. A Christian community is rooted in its local community and fully engaged with it. A Christian community is always looking for opportunities to share the Good News.

St Joseph's Parish, Panyangara, Uganda

“At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

Romans 15:25-26

St Joseph's is a parish in northern Uganda under the pastoral care of the Mill Hill Missionaries. In early 2022, Our Lady of Mercy parish formed a partnership with St Joseph's. We have committed ourselves to pray for each other.

Our Lady of Mercy has a Mission Team that supports and develops this relationship and organises practical ways that we can support our sisters and brothers in Panyangara.

Digital Media Evangelisation Team

“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:24

The Digital Media Evangelisation team use social media and technology to spread the Good News and to keep parishioners engaged with the parish through the week. The team looks after the parish's social media accounts and web site. They also help with the live streaming of Mass every week.

Open House

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Matthew 25:35

Open House is a parish initiative that every week reaches out to the homeless, hungry and needy of Sunderland providing a warm welcome, a listening ear, a safe space and hot food.

The Open House team work with vulnerable adults and need to have a special safeguarding check.

University Chaplaincy

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

The parish is blessed to host the Catholic Chaplaincy to the University of Sunderland. The chaplaincy is based out of St Mary's Catholic Centre in Bridge Street, next to St Mary's church. It has a full time lay chaplain who, working with the priest-chaplain, organises various activities for the students and staff of the University.

The chaplaincy helps and supports students during their time at

Sunderland University. The chaplaincy reflects the multi-cultural and diverse ages of the student and staff population of the University of Sunderland.

The parish and chaplaincy work closely together on many shared activities throughout the year and this offers opportunities for parishioners to be involved with the work of the chaplaincy and with supporting and welcoming students to our parish.

Visiting the Sick and Housebound

“I was sick and you visited me.

Matthew 25:36

When a parishioner is sick and unable to come to Church for the sacraments, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion visit them to pray with them. The Eucharist is both the life blood of the parish and the bond that unites us as members of the Body of Christ. Visiting the sick, the housebound and those in care homes demonstrates to them that they are still valued members of our community. The visits keep alive and make real the bonds of love that the Eucharist brings about among all Christ's faithful, whether they are able to attend the weekly celebration of the Eucharist or not. Visiting the sick and housebound requires a special safeguarding check.

Bereavement Ministry

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.

Revelation 21:4

The members of the bereavement ministry pray both for the dead and for those who mourn them. When a parishioner dies, a member of the bereavement ministry is appointed to pray for that person and their family for one year. This way, they ensure that everyone is prayed for and that no grieving family lacks the support of the prayers of the parish. Once a year, in November, the parish celebrates a Requiem for all those

who have died in the previous year. The members of the bereavement ministry help organise this celebration and welcome the families of the bereaved to it.

Missio & Red Boxes

“And Jesus said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”

Mark 16:15

Since October 2020, Our Lady of Mercy Parish has been under the pastoral care of the Mill Hill Missionaries. Missio is the Pope's own charity that supports the work of missionaries and young churches all over the world. A great way to support the missions is to pray for missionaries every day and take home a Red Box. The money collected in the Red Boxes goes to support both the work of Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries.

In St Mary's and St Cecilia's churches there are local secretaries that organise the collection of the Red Boxes and the forwarding of money to Missio.

Leadership

“Jesus said to his disciples, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

Luke 22:25-27

When we are baptised we share in the life of Christ who was anointed priest, prophet and king. Parishioners who share with the clergy in the parish's leadership ministries cooperate in Christ's kingly ministry of servant leadership. As imitators of Christ, it is the responsibility of each Christian to be, in their own unique way, a good shepherd.

Parish Pastoral Council

“And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

Acts 14:23

The members of parish pastoral council are drawn from all parts of the parish and represent the various communities and ministries that make up Our Lady of Mercy Parish. Their primary function is to pray for the parish and to listen to the voice of God, discerning the way that the Holy Spirit is calling us to serve one another and our city.

The parish pastoral council works with the parish priest and clergy and represents the thoughts and needs of the parishioners. They help the clergy make decisions on the pastoral care of parishioners and the various missionary outreaches of the parish.

Parish Stewardship Committee

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

1 Peter 4:10-11

The members of the parish stewardship committee encourage good stewardship in the parish and encourage parishioners to see stewardship of their time, talents and treasures as an essential part of the Christian life.

The stewardship committee acts in the place of the finance committee, ensuring the parish's income and expenditure is made in a manner befitting of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are responsible for checking the accounts and making a report to the diocese each year.

The stewardship committee looks at the provision of ministries in the parish and encourages parishioners to commit part of their time and their talents in serving God and their neighbour.

Monkwearmouth Catholic Partnership

Our parish is part of a group of 11 Catholic communities that serve the people of Sunderland. It is called the Monkwearmouth Catholic Partnership to reflect the ancient roots of Catholicism in this part of the country.

The partnership helps to coordinate Catholic life and pastoral care in the City of Sunderland. You can find out more about the work of the partnership at wearcatholics.org.

Journey in Faith

“After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.

Luke 10:1-2

Our faith is the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in a field. We are given our faith, however, not to hide it but to share it far and wide, especially with those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ, or with those who have fallen away from the practice of their faith.

The parish's catechetical programs are our response to Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations and to teach his commandments to people.

Some of the programs help people to prepare to receive sacraments. The parish also holds regular programs to help parishioners learn more about the Catholic faith and the scriptures.

Infant Baptism

“Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

John 3:5

The primary way we fulfil Jesus' command to make disciples is by baptising and raising our children in the faith. Catechists help parents and godparents prepare for their child's baptism and for the promises they will make. They teach them about the importance of the sacrament of baptism and encourage them in the practice of their faith, especially if they have been away for a while.

RCICCA

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age is a program for primary school children who were not baptised as infants. The catechists in this program support families in handing on the faith for older children and preparing them for baptism. Catechists in this ministry require a special safeguarding check.

RCIA

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’

Acts 2:38

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a series of stages and steps an adult passes through on the road to baptism. Catechists and sponsors accompany these adults as they learn about Jesus and the Catholic Church and prepare to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

Catechists and sponsors also accompany adults from other Christian denominations who desire to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Confirmation

“When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Acts 19:6

For many young people baptised as infants, the sacrament of confirmation is the first opportunity they have for manifesting their own desire to enter into a discipleship relationship with Jesus Christ. Confirmation catechists accompany young people as they prepare to receive this sacrament. They model for the young people examples of Christian maturity and help them with the preparation course. Confirmation catechists require a special safeguarding check to work with children.

Ongoing formation

“Jesus did not speak to the people except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Mark 4:34

Our Catholic faith is beautiful and rich and complex. As we grow and move through our lives our relationship with Jesus and our faith should also grow and mature. For many Catholics, unfortunately, their faith formation stopped when they left school.

Our Lady of Mercy Parish offers various opportunities for parishioners to learn more about their faith. We hold regular courses on scripture and the Catholic faith so that everyone can deepen their faith and their relationship with Jesus.

Schools

☺ Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

Psalm 25:4–5

As soon as the Catholic Church could legally function in England after the long years of persecution following the Reformation, it set the establishment of schools for the poor as a priority. In many parishes schools were built before churches. The Catholic Church in Sunderland has a strong tradition of establishing and running schools.

We are blessed in Our Lady of Mercy Parish to have three Catholic schools.

St Mary's Primary School

St Mary's R.C. Primary School is a warm, friendly school where the staff and Governors work together to provide a caring and safe environment in which children thrive. We encourage the children to be independent, responsible and enthusiastic learners. We enjoy working in partnership with parents to achieve the best outcomes for all our children and enable them to develop spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally and creatively.

St Anthony's Catholic Girls' Academy

St Anthony's Catholic Girls' Academy is a happy, inclusive and caring community within the Catholic faith tradition. Our school was formed by the Sisters of Mercy in 1904. The school is diverse and welcoming, aiming for excellence in all that they undertake and celebrating the many, and varied, achievements of our community in all aspects of school life.

St Aidan's Catholic Academy

The origins of St Aidan's date back to 1928 when St Mary's Grammar School was opened to serve the Catholic boys of Sunderland as the town's population expanded rapidly due to the success of the coal mining and ship building industries. The Jesuits took over in 1935 and the Christian Brothers in 1948. In April 2013, the school converted to an Academy. St Aidan's continues to serve Sunderland boys, of all faiths and none, who are willing to uphold the special ethos of the Academy. St Aidan's remains true to its founding principles: We are committed to the care and success of every boy in a way that is rooted in the values of the gospel and we nurture each and every student and encourage them on their journey to reaching their full potential.

Prayer and Action Groups

In addition to the core ministries of parish life several prayer, action and social groups are active in the parish and city. These groups offer other concrete ways of ministering and of following in the footsteps of Christ.

Over 60s

The Over 60s group meet at St Mary's Catholic Centre on Tuesday afternoon after the lunchtime Mass. They are a social and support group open to anyone to join them for some fun and good company.

Saint Cecilia's Prayer Group

This group meets at 8pm on Monday evenings at St Cecilia's. Everyone is welcome to join them for prayer and worship.

Marriage Care

Couples preparing for Marriage in the Catholic Church take part in a preparation course run by Marriage Care. The course is run by a group of married people who share their experience of living Christian marriage and encourage the engaged couple to share together their vision for their marriage.

Marriage Care also provide support to married couples facing difficulties in their relationship. Go to marriagecare.org.uk for more details.

Legion of Mary

The object of the Legion of Mary is the glory of God through the holiness of its members developed by prayer and active co-operation, under ecclesiastical guidance, in Mary's and the Church's work of crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ.

Today, active and auxiliary (praying) members make up a total of over 10 million members worldwide, making it the largest apostolic organisation

of lay people in the Catholic Church. Works include door-to-door evangelisation, parishioner visitation, visitation of the sick or aged, Catholic education, visiting the newly baptised, visiting families, and meeting the other spiritual needs of the parish community. Go to <http://legionofmary.org.uk> for more details.

SVP

The St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) is part of an international Christian voluntary network dedicated to tackling poverty in all its forms by providing practical assistance to people in need. Our 10,000 members, motivated by their faith, visit vulnerable or isolated people across England and Wales and offer them friendship and practical support. The essence of their work is person-to-person contact and spending time with people is our greatest gift.

The core befriending service is complemented by Community Support Projects which reflect the needs of our local communities and include over 40 community shops, St Vincent's Centres, furniture provision, supported accommodation and Approved Premises for offenders leaving prison. They also run several 'special works' including children's camps and holidays, which offer disadvantaged families and children a much-needed break. Go to svp.org.uk for more information.

Financial Support

“Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the Lord.

1 Chronicles 29:9

Our Lady of Mercy Parish is blessed by the generosity of its parishioners. The parish uses the financial resources parishioners provide to provide the necessities for the celebration of the liturgy, to heat, light and maintain our churches, halls and properties and to support the clergy.

The parishioners' generosity also supports our various outreaches. Through offerings to Open House and St Anthony's Bread we provide food for the homeless and needy and sleeping bags for rough sleepers.

All parishioners have the obligation, insofar as they are able, to support financially the parish. Every year the parish publishes its accounts for everyone to inspect and every month we publish a summary of the previous month's income so that parishioners can see how much money has come in and where it has been spent. The Parish Stewardship Committee also scrutinises the parish finances at every meeting.

Becoming A Minister

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

1 Peter 4:10

Jesus never asked for volunteers in the Gospel. He called people and invited them to follow him. The same is true for us today. On the day of our baptism, Jesus called us and invited us to follow him all the days of our lives and into eternity. Every day he renews that call and invites us to follow him with concrete acts of love and service, living as good stewards of the graces he has given to us.

If you feel Jesus is inviting you to share in one of the ministries in this handbook then respond!

There are a few ways of doing this. First you can fill in the form on the parish website sunderlandcatholic.com. You can also fill in one of the cards at the back of the church, hand it into a priest or put it in with your collection. Finally you can give your details to one of the stewards at the back of Mass or directly to the clergy.

Once we have your details we'll hand it onto the coordinator for the ministry who'll get back in touch with you.

“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

1 John 3:18

