

St Mary and St Michael's Catholic Church
GARSTANG AND CALDER VALE

A Parish of the Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered Charity, no.234331
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12th / 13th December 2015

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



The liturgy of Gaudete Sunday, Joy Sunday, is full of expectancy. The Gospel focuses on Jesus' cousin. John calls consistently to the ordinary people, he calls to tax collectors, to soldiers (Roman soldiers who would be from all nationalities in the Roman Empire). Already we have a foretaste of the Good News of Jesus, proclaimed to ordinary people.

When people ask him how they might respond to John's call, he invites them to be just and fair with each other. He was preparing the people to receive Jesus' 'revolutionary' vision of Justice – revolutionary when compared with the legalistic teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees.

“Faced with a vision of justice as the mere observance of the law that judges people simply by dividing them into two groups – the just and sinners – Jesus is bent on revealing great gifts of mercy that searches out sinners and offers them pardon and salvation.” (MV 20) This is how Pope Francis describes justice in his decree “Miserecordiae Vultus” in which he proclaims the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

As we begin this Year, the Advent call is one to justice and mercy. “These are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that *unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love.* (MV 20) We are being called deeper in this Year of Mercy into the mystery of God's love for us.

It was out of love for us that God gave us his Son. It was out of love for us that at Christmas time we gaze in awe on a totally dependant new-born baby and in faith know this baby to be the infinite, all-powerful Son of God.

This mystery of our faith stops us in our tracks – how can God love us so much that he sends us his only Son? How can God love us so much that he sends his only Son to sinners, to ordinary people to bring them his divine mercy? How can God love us so much that he shows us such forgiveness with kindness, such mercy?

These are some of the mysteries of our faith that we will contemplate during this Year of Mercy. What an opportunity we are being offered. What a joy to contemplate the gift of Mercy! This surely is Gaudete – Joy – Sunday.

New items and information

The Jubilee Year of Mercy – The Bishop has decided that out of sensitivity to those suffering in Carlisle at present after the floods, the Opening of the Shrine of Mercy at Our Lady & St Joseph's Church, Carlisle, will be celebrated at a later date to be determined (in the New Year).

Letters have been received from the Apostolic Nuncio and from Bishop Michael passing on their personal sympathy and the closeness and prayers of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to all who have been affected by the floods.

Mission Boxes – The sum of £158.17 has been banked, and boxes are now ready for collection from the church porch, including some emptied in September. *Thank you.*

St Vincent de Paul Society – thanks you very much for the very generous £249.30 which was collected last week.

Did you know...we are called this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy to be living signs of compassion? Afera Gebremedhine lives with her family in Ethiopia. She used to struggle as a single mother to provide for her family. Thanks to your generosity, which is an act of mercy, Afera was given, by CAFOD, a cow which gave birth to calves a few months later. Afera's cows produce around eight litres of milk a day which she uses to make butter to sell at the local market. She says, “I am happy and better today because I can feed my children.” CAFOD's *World Gifts* are transforming lives!

Lourdes – Possible Lourdes Pilgrimage 2016 – In order to look at the possibility of arranging a parish pilgrimage to Lourdes next year, it would be helpful to know the numbers of people who may be interested. Dates have not been finalised yet, but more information will be available after Christmas. If interested, please put your name on the list at the back of church. *Elizabeth Horn.*

Why not make a Retreat in 2016? – If anyone is thinking about making a retreat in 2016, the latest list of all the retreat houses in England and Wales is now in the sacristy for consultation. There is also an interesting article about Hyning Hall in the brochure. Please do not remove the brochure from the sacristy. *Fr David.*

CAFOD – we have received a letter thanking all parishioners for the very generous £300 donation sent to CAFOD.

Previously Published Items

2016 Diocesan Directories are on sale in the shop, price £3.00.

Stars at Christmas – 2015 – As we decorate our church at Christmas, we are reminded of the happy times we have shared with those we love, not only the people we are blessed still to have with us but our dear departed ones too. For many Christmases past, many of our parishioners have symbolised their prayers in the form of a star bearing the names of loved ones no longer with us so that it can be hung in church over Christmas to draw the prayers of us all. If you would like to participate in this custom you are welcome to do so. The stars are free, but should you wish to make a charitable donation, the poor people of Chivuna in Zambia will appreciate your benevolence. *Available after Masses on today & 20th December.*

Why not join the Choir? – The choir is an integral part of every Christian church. This is not just convention but has evolved over two thousand years because music, singing in particular, is an important part of worship. When we sing we pray in a way which enables us to savour the words we use, giving glory to God more effectively. The ambience of God’s house results from many factors, but none is more powerful than that of liturgical music. This requires a choir dedicated to producing a programme of music consonant with church tradition and liturgy. There is far more to this than simply plucking popular tunes out of the air! Good churches invariably have good choirs. If our parish is to remain good, it must sustain a good choir. Please think seriously about joining your choir. It is necessary to have some sort of voice, but despite so many claiming total lack of singing ability, there are very few people who honestly cannot sing. No ageism is involved; all ages are welcome and there are no “screen tests”! All we ask is commitment. These days we see so much half-heartedness and apathy in the Christian faith we should treasure; joining the choir could be the first step in remedying this. *Dr. Carter*

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children is holding its first-ever SPUC Lune Valley outdoor Christmas Carol Singing event which will take place on Saturday 19th December in Market Square Lancaster.

Wednesday Word – To help us prepare for Mass on 20th December, the new copy of the Wednesday Word can be found at the back of church, on yellow paper.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Veronica ‘Ronnie’ Regan who died last week. Her funeral Mass will be held next Thursday, 17th December, at 12 noon. *May she rest in peace.*

Please pray for those whose anniversaries occur at about this time: Grace Ross Darling, Ethel Carroll, Dennis Regan, Arthur J Nickson, Charles Taylor, Joe Browne, Lucy Cahill, Joan Norcross, Josephine Black and Helena Hodgson. *May they rest in peace.*

We ask the Lord to encourage and give health to our sick and disabled parishioners, families and friends, including: Mrs Jean Parkinson (Jim’s wife), Ann and Jackson Wickes, Thomas Lowe (Bert’s brother), Ewan (an 11 year old boy undergoing treatment for a brain tumour), Judith, Phillip, John Fairey, Pat Hickey, Maurice Iddon, Sheila Murphy, Rosemary Davies, Anne Brockbank, Michael McCarthy (living in France), Dorothy Evans, Lucy and Family, Kathryn, Susanne, Jessica Holmes (4 years old with leukaemia), Mark Noblet, Anthonio Dilao, Bernadette O’Neill, Tom Horn, John Ashcroft, Margaret Shepherd, Sharon Hodgson, Christine, Peter Holland, Ian Moran, Tony Winstanley, Alyson, Michael Hendry, Christopher Simpson, Auntie Sophie, Christopher Brown, Simon Thompson, Sheila Cookson, Francisca Rainford and Alison Green. *(When people whose names are placed on this sick list have recovered their health, please let us know.)*

Response to the psalm at the 10 am Mass:

Mass Times & Intentions, Saturday 12th – Sunday 20th December 2015

Sat	12 th	6.00 pm (Vigil)	Eve Graham (Anniversary)
Sun	13 th	10.00 am	Cathie Cadden
Mon	14 th	No Mass	
Tues	15 th	12 noon	Family and Friends
Wed	16 th	7.00 pm	(For Vocations to the Priesthood) Eileen Brierley (Deceased)
Thurs	17 th	12 noon	Funeral Mass for Veronica Regan
Fri	18 th	9.30 am	(in school) Everyone who needs a prayer, especially prisoners and their families
Sat	19 th	9.30 am	All Our Parishioners
		06.00 pm (Vigil)	William Southworth
Sun	20 th	10.00 am	Ann Elizabeth Nugent

Devotions and Celebrations this week:

Wed	16 th	6.45 pm	Rosary
Fri	18 th	10 - 11 am	(after school Mass in Plessington Chapel) Holy Hour for Priestly Vocations

Special Days this Week:

Sun	13 th	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – Gaudete Sunday
Mon	14 th	St John of the Cross
Sun	20 th	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Meetings this Week:

Tues	15 th	4.00 pm	Liturgy & Spirituality
Weds	16 th	7.30 pm	Choir Practice
Thurs	17 th	7.15 pm	Journey in Faith – with enquirers

Last Week’s Attendance:

Sat	14 th	6.00 pm (Vigil)	Adults: 90	Children: 5	
Sun	15 th	10.00 am	Adults: 132	Children: 33	Total: 260

Monies Received:

Offertory (including Standing Orders): £966.50; Shop: £70; Votive Lights: £33.70; Funeral: £600; Memorial: £30. *Many thanks to you all.*

Churches Together in Garstang & District

Ecumenical Morning Prayer will be held at 07.45 am each Tuesday in December here at SS Mary & Michael’s. Shopper’s Service (Pause for Thought) is at 12.15 pm every Thursday, at Garstang Methodist Church.