

The Catholic Parish of St Mary, Leek
This parish is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham Registered Charity No 234216
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**“Our vision is to be a Catholic Parish living Christ’s command,
‘Love one another as I have loved you’.**

Saturday 21 December 10am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Confessions
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Micah :1-4; Ps 79; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

6.15pm Mass Mrs Barbara Duffin RIP (CC)
Sunday 22 December 9.30am Morning Prayer from the Divine Office
10am Mass Piotr Zwierski RIP
1.30pm Mass in the Polish Language
4pm Rosary and Benediction

Monday 23 December **Advent Feria**
Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Ps 24; Luke 1:57-66
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Joseph Delicata (GW)

Tuesday 24 December **Advent Feria**
Christmas Eve 2 *Samuel 7:1-56, 8-12, 14, 16; Ps 88; Luke 1:67-79*
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Special Intention

Tuesday 24 December **SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD**
Christmas Eve *Isaiah 62:1-5; Ps 88; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:18-25*
6.15pm Vigil Mass Mr Eric Arthur Duffin RIP (CC)
9pm Mass in the Polish Language

Wednesday 25 December *Midnight: Isaiah 9:1-7; PS 95; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14*
Christmas Day *Christmas Day: Isaiah 52: 7-10; PS 97; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18*
12Midnight Midnight Mass Bernie Brennan RIP
9.30am Morning Prayer from the Divine Office.
10am Christmas Day Mass Michael G Taaffe RIP (MT)

Thursday 26 December **Feast of St Stephen, the first Martyr**
Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; PS 30; Matthew 10:17-22
11am Mass for Altar Servers Michael Stafford RIP (JS)

Friday 27 December **Feast of St John, Apostle, Evangelist**
1 John 1:1-4; Ps 96; John 20:2-8
11am Mass Giovanni Antoniazzi RIP

Saturday 28 December **FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH**
1 Samuel 1:20-22,24-28; Ps 84; 1 John 3:1-2,21-24; Luke 2:41-52
6.15pm Mass Delia Ryan RIP

Sunday 29 December 9.30am Morning Prayer from the Divine Office
10am Mass For you, the People of the Parish
1.30pm Mass in the Polish Language
4pm Rosary and Benediction

Anniversaries for this week: Kenneth Worthington, Victoria Wersockas, Margaret Chant, Margaret Schonau, Joseph Delicata, Peter Nowell, Michael Noel Kelly, Joan Greenwood, Alice Mary Astles, Lucy Foster, Edward Szczotka, Beryl Edna Wheatley, Gladys May Wood, Barbara Duffin, Sister Genevieve Bermingham I.B.V.M., Jessie Higgins, John William Watson, Irene Stephanie Dale, Eric Arthur Duffin, Hugo Victor Wood, Laraine Moran, Mary Yates, Winifred Lorna Heath, Michael Gerard (Mick) Taaffe, Margaret Gertrude Lymer (Peggy), Clara Folga, Annie May Skaer, Percy Wardle, Ellen Kavanagh, John (Jack) Charles Piggott

Monday 30 December **Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas**
1 John 2:12-17; Ps 95; Luke 2:36-40
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass John Gorevan RIP

Tuesday 31 December **Seventh Day within the Octave of Christmas**
New Years Eve 1 *John 2:18-21; Ps 95; John 1:1-18*
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Nicola Crehan Ints
4pm New Year’s Eve Vigil

Wednesday 1 January **SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD**
New Years Day *Numbers 6: 22-27; Ps 66; Galatians 4: 4-7; Luke 2:16-21*
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Baby Kieran Freeman RIP

Thursday 2 January **Memorial of St Basil the Great & St Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops, Doctors of the Church**
1 John 2:22-28; Ps 97; John 1:19-28

Friday 3 January **Christmas Feria; First Friday**
1 John 2:29-3:6; Ps 97; John 1:29-34
9.40am Rosary 10am Mass Ann Coniry RIP

Saturday 4 January 10am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Confessions
SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
Isaiah 60:1-6; PS 71; Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12
 6.15pm Mass Clive Owen RIP (CO)

Sunday 5 January 9.30am Morning Prayer from the Divine Office
 10am Mass Januz Szura-Zwierski (Spec Int)
 1.30pm Mass in the Polish Language
 4pm Rosary and Benediction

Anniversaries for this week: Ellen Kavanagh, John (Jack) Charles Piggott, John William Clulow, Leslie Gower Brown, Leonard G E Shakespeare, John Gregore Kelsall, Bruce Hargreaves, Freda Cecilia Halpin, Anthony Frederick Davenport, Ann Wallace, Franciszeh (Frank) Klucznik, Kevin Sheridan, Mary,, Kelsall, Sydney Fairclough, Francis Annie Mayers, William John Lawton, Stanley McCabe, Robin Richard Bridgett, Agnes Grice, Edward Bowcock, Jan Dryglas, Sarah Geston, Eugene Tristram, Gertrude France, Ambrose Fayard, Alex Bunty, Colvin Hugh Parr, John Lawrence Campion, Edith Collier, Arthur Priestman, Dr. Jerzy (George) Surawy, Edward Wasilewski, James Anthony Dwyer, Jessie Iris Quinn, Edward Carding, Marie Rose Bird, Lida Kania, Ellen Coughlan, Waclaw Cztoch, Beryl Mary Davenport, Elizabeth Hirst

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Parish Safeguarding The Parish operates in accordance with Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and the National and Archdioceses policies & procedures at all times. Our Parish Safeguarding Representative is Malcolm Sproat. He can be contacted at: sg.stmary.leek@rcaob.org.uk or alternatively the Diocesan Safeguarding team can be contacted on 0121 230 6240/ safeguarding@rcaob.org.uk if you have any concern.

Children of primary school age must be accompanied by an adult if they need to leave the church to use the toilets during Mass or other Church services. Also, please do not let children of this age go near the votive candle stands unaccompanied, and do not let them run round the car park. It is important that we do everything to ensure that accidents do not happen. Thank you for your help in keeping our children safe.

The Pope's Prayer Intention for December For pilgrims of hope. We pray that this Jubilee Year strengthen our faith, helping us to recognize the Risen Christ in our daily lives, and that it may transform us into pilgrims of Christian hope.

Please pray for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life Can you set aside one day each month to pray for Vocations? If so, could you sign the list at the back of church, please.

Please pray for the sick Moyra Chadwick, Chris Rea, Kathryn Higginbotham, Norman Syddall, Andrew Clifford, Janusz Szura- Zwierski, Fr Anthony Dykes, Madeline Horter, Anne Malkin.
Due to data protection legislation, in order for a name to be printed in this newsletter, the consent of the person who is unwell needs to be given.

Prayer for the Faithful Departed Please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr Fred Sheldon, a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Dear friends,

"Love one another as I have loved you." We are incredibly blessed at St Mary's! Thank you for the devotion you show to the care and upkeep of the church; it is looking great and ready for our celebration of Christmas.

I am very grateful to everyone, young and not so young for your loyalty to our parish over the last 12 months. I am incredibly proud of you and your wanting to both support the parish in both practically and financially. I am inspired that you want to learn more about and grow in your faith: we have three adults preparing for baptism; there are children attending non Catholic Schools who want to receive the Sacraments; and, parents of the children at St Mary's are making great sacrifices to ensure that their children are at Mass every Sunday: keep going – it is worth the sacrifice!

Welcome to this special Christmas and New Year double edition of the Parish Newsletter. Here is some information about Mass times for Christmas and some words of introduction to the Jubilee Year which Pope Francis will begin on Christmas Eve when he opens the Holy Door at St Peter's and leads everyone in the Church in the Jubilee of Hope.

These are the Mass times for Christmas Day. Together, let's make a bold act of witness by being at Christmas Mass this year!

Tuesday 24 December, 2024 Christmas Eve

6.15pm Vigil Mass
 9pm Polish Mass

Wednesday 25 December, 2024 Christmas Day

12 midnight Midnight Mass
 10am Christmas Day Mass

Let's make these days, Holy Days!

Sunday and Weekday Mass – I invite you to be at Mass during this Holy Season. As Catholics, the Church calls on us to be at Mass Sunday by Sunday by Sunday.

I encourage you – as far as you can – to be at Weekday Mass. The Bible readings during the last few days of Advent form for us a waiting room giving us the Biblical preparation ahead of the celebration of Christmas.

The days immediately following Christmas Day form what is called an "Octave" and just as a musical octave is carried over 8 notes, the Christmas celebration is carried over 8 days. If you cannot be at Mass, the parish newsletter always gives indications to the Biblical readings for each day: please do read the bible readings at home.

Confession – towards the end of October, Pope Francis met with the Franciscan priests whose mission is to celebrate Confessions for pilgrims and visitors to St Peter's Basilica. That meeting was to mark the 250 years that the Franciscans have undertaken this crucially important apostolate. For me, Confession is an important ministry and one which we should all take time to do correctly.

During the meeting with Confessors, Pope Francis encouraged Confessors who administer Confession in St Peter's and all priests who celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with this short anecdote: It's very encouraging for both priests and penitents.

"I have told the story of that Capuchin who was a confessor in Buenos Aires, several times before — I don't know if I have told you this — I created him a Cardinal, not this time, last time. He is 96 years old and continues to confess; I used to go to him, he forgives

everything! He once came to tell me that he was afraid he had forgiven too much. "And what will you do?", I asked him. "I will go before the Lord: Lord, will you forgive me? I am sorry, I have forgiven too much! But, mind, it was you who gave me the bad example!". Always forgive, everything and without asking too much. And if I do not understand? God understands, keep going! Let them feel mercy."

Here are some resources for your personal prayer

Walk with Me – the new prayer books with daily reflections are at the back of the church

Best Advent Ever – sign up at www.dynamiccatholic.com/advent for daily reflections

Advent Gospel - Reflections from Bishop Robert Barron – sign up at www.wordonfire.org

Be Still and Know – daily devotionals from Premier Christian Radio – sign up at www.premier.org.uk

Personal Prayer during Advent and the Christmas Season Whenever, I walk through the Market Square, I say a prayer for all the people of our parish at the Christmas Nativity scene, praying for God's blessing on our parish, on the children and young people especially those preparing for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and for those who – for whatever reason – have stopped coming to church that they will know that they are always welcome. Here is another extract from Pope Francis's Apostolic Letter on the meaning and importance of the Christmas crib.

"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Lk 2:15). So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words. Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene." (AS,5)

Advent and Christmas display For the seasons of Advent and Christmas, the seasons of hope, do, go look at the display and collect some prayer resources.

Are you looking forward to Christmas? Here's an extract from Matthew Kelly's book, 33 Days to Eucharistic Glory.

"There are 45,000 different denominations of Christianity in the world. What is the one thing that makes the Catholic Church unique? ... The Eucharist. Jesus Christ – the King of Kings, the Lord of Lord, the Alpha and the Omega – truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – in the Eucharist. He is the difference."

Thursday 26 December 11am Mass for the Altar Servers On 26 December, the Church celebrates the feast day of St Stephen, the first martyr who is the patron saint of altar servers.

St Mary's Parish 200 Club It is time to renew our subscriptions for the 200 Club. Each number is £1 per month. There is a draw on the last Sunday of each with two cash prizes. If you are in, you may win. Please – we ask – can you use the specially prepared 200 Club envelopes

Collection at the Christmas Masses The collection at the Christmas Masses is your personal gift to the Parish Priest and forms a major part of his income.

2025 is Jubilee Year

Every 25 years, the Church celebrates a Jubilee. At Christmas Eve Mass at St Peter's, Pope Francis will open the Holy Door and lead every member of the Church into this once in a generation occasion.

It is an important occasion for every member of the Catholic Church. For us, I am planning to give everyone a Jubilee Toolkit which will include a very helpful prayer book to help mark the Jubilee Year, a calendar of the various Jubilee Days for different groups in the Church, and a Prayer Card which includes the Official Jubilee Prayer which I would like us to use in church every day during the Jubilee!

Here is a reflection written by the Pope and it is a very helpful introduction to our year long celebration of the Jubilee of Hope.

In the history of the people of Israel, the sound of a ram's horn called yobel - from which the term "jubilee" originates - echoed through every village, marking the start of a special year as prescribed by the Law of Moses (cf. Lv 25).

Jubilee, a time of renewal

The jubilee year was a time of redemption and renewal, symbolised by practices that remain strikingly relevant even today. During this year, the land was left uncultivated to remind people that it belongs to God and is a gift entrusted to humanity for stewardship rather than exploitation. Debts were forgiven to restore social justice and counter inequality, a practice that occurred every fifty years. Slaves were liberated, fostering the dream of a human community free from oppression and discrimination - a vision reminiscent of the Exodus, where God formed His people into a single family on a shared journey.

A journey of hope

At the start of His ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus embraced the concept of the Jubilee and gave it new and ultimate meaning. He revealed Himself as the face of God on earth, sent to redeem the poor, free captives, and manifest the Father's compassion for the wounded, the fallen, and the hopeless.

Jesus came to free humanity from every form of bondage, to open the eyes of the blind, and to set the oppressed free (cf. Lk 4:18–19). His messianic mission expanded the Jubilee's significance, addressing all forms of human oppression. It became a moment of grace, offering freedom to those imprisoned by sin, resignation, and despair. It also served as an invitation to heal inner blindness

that prevents us from encountering God and recognising others. Above all, it revived the joy of meeting the Lord, enabling people to resume life's journey with renewed hope.

Rediscovering the joy of encountering Jesus

Since 1300, when Pope Boniface VIII issued the first Jubilee Bull, millions of pilgrims have journeyed to Rome. Their outward pilgrimage symbolised an inner desire for renewal, seeking to align their daily lives—despite challenges and struggles—with the hope of the Gospel. Deep within every heart lies an unquenchable thirst for happiness and fulfilment. In the face of life's uncertainties, people long to overcome mistrust, scepticism, and despair. Christ, our hope, responds to this inner longing, inviting us to rediscover the joy of meeting Him. This encounter transforms and renews life itself. As Pope Francis writes: "Christian life is a journey that requires special moments to nourish and strengthen hope, an indispensable companion that helps us glimpse the goal: the encounter with the Lord Jesus" (*Spes non confundit* , n. 5).

The Holy Door: a passage to new life

The Jubilee is one of these significant moments. The opening of the Holy Door on Christmas Eve symbolises a passage—a spiritual renewal—and an invitation to embrace the new life offered through meeting Christ. Once again, Rome will welcome pilgrims from across the globe, as it did in 1300 during the first Church Jubilee. In those early days, pilgrims from the north climbed Monte Mario to catch their first glimpse of the Eternal City, while others arrived from the south, navigating the Tiber in small boats. All shared a deep yearning to reach the Holy Door and step through its threshold. Every Jubilee since has been marked by the meeting of pilgrims' steps with the beauty of Rome.

Rome: a welcoming and hospitable city

For the Jubilee, extraordinary efforts are made to improve roads, enhance public transport, restore monuments, and modernise the city. However, beyond the urban preparations, the Jubilee calls Rome to embrace a unique vocation. The city is invited to become a place of welcome and hospitality, a melting pot of diversity and dialogue, a multicultural hub where the world's colours come together like a mosaic.

Rome can embody an eternal spirit, rooted in its glorious past yet committed to building a future without barriers, discrimination, or mistrust. This is the dream to nurture: that Rome will reveal to the world the beauty of its Christian heritage—not only in the splendour of its art but, above all, in its commitment to hospitality and fraternity.

May every heart and every street of this city resound with joy, echoing the hymn:

"Immortal Rome of Martyrs and Saints... neither force nor terror shall prevail, but Truth and Love will reign." (Pontifical Hymn).

Pope Francis's Prayer for the Jubilee of Hope, 2025

Father in heaven,
may the *faith* you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of *charity* enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever. Amen

For more information about the Jubilee Year visit www.iubilaeum2025.va

*With my prayers and best wishes for you and your family
at this Christmas and New Year season.*

Fr Martin