

Parishes of St John XXIII & St Joseph, Birtley



Incorporating: Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, Washington;
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Penshaw; St Bede, Usworth;
St John Boste, Oxclose; St Joseph, Birtley
Fr Martin Morris, Parish Priest, Tel: 01916498257



Administrator: Audrey Huntley 0191 4163583 sj23office01@gmail.com

In the Partnership of Benedict

Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Penshaw, Sacriston, Washington

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, GAUDETE SUNDAY, 16 - 17 DECEMBER 2023, Year B

Saturday	St Joseph	5pm	Frank McEnaney RIP
16 December	St Bede	5pm	The People of the Parish
Vigil			
Sunday	St John Boste	9:30am	Teresa Cairns Deceased
17 December	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am	Cynthia & Hilda Birthday Blessings
3rd Sunday of Advent	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Clare Madden

John the Baptist dominates the Gospels of the Second and Third Sundays of Advent. Last Sunday Mark painted the picture that would inspire legions of artists, particularly in Renaissance Italy of a man who wore camel skin and lived on locusts and wild honey. His death would be no less dramatically depicted.

In John's Gospel today, all this is pared away. John the Baptist appears after the cosmic first five verses of John's Gospel, depicting God as the Word, the source of life. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out. John 1.v5



The John of this Gospel is much more important as a witness than as a baptist. He is characterized by what he is *not*. He was *not* the light. He was *not* the Christ, *nor* Elijah *nor* the Prophet, in answer to the questions of the priests and the Levites. Jesus, in contrast is the understated **I am**: "I am the resurrection and the Life." John 11:25. John the Baptist can only identify himself in relation to Jesus. He has a crowd of ardent followers who will remain long after his cruel death but he is quick to place himself in Isaiah's prophecy "a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord."

He is not the main act: He contrasts himself to Jesus in a figure of speech of total submission that would have shocked his Jewish audience. When he tells them that he is not worthy to loosen the sandal strap of the Messiah, he is underlining that not only is he *not* the Messiah, he is not even worthy to be his servant. Later in John's Gospel he will state emphatically: "He must become greater, I must become less." John 3.30

John the Baptist reminds us that it is the Word, the Light that is important. It is the Messiah. "A man came, sent by God" has resonance for all of us in the light of our own Baptism, in the Holy Spirit. How do we live out our own witness to the Light? How do we use the Advent of 2023 to combat darkness and ensure that the Light is celebrated? What are we sent by God to do? The Advent Gospels remind us that we must wait attentively.

Angela Nichols

Fr Martin Morris	0191 649 8257	Deacon Frank O'Neill	0779 115 5845
Fr Martin Wheaton	0770 996 1040	Deacon Peter Lavery	0730 505 9297
Fr Luke Wilkinson	0191 649 8257	Deacon Tony Joy	0779 989 3419

Mass Times & Intentions - Week Beginning Monday 18 December 2023

Day	Church	Time	
Monday 18 December	St Bede	10am	Priest's Intention
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	7pm	Eddie Ashburner
Tuesday 19 December	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am	Robert Holland
	St Joseph	7pm	The Sick of the Parish
Wednesday 20 December	St Bede	10am	Our Schoolchildren
	St John Boste	7pm	Percy, Lilian & Brian Mills RIP
Thursday 21 December	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am	In Thanksgiving for David Bentham
	St Peter Canisius St Joseph	12 noon	Terence Hanley RIP
Friday 22 December	St John Boste	10am	Martin Kerrigan RIP
	St Joseph	10am	Jean Greenwood
Saturday 23 December	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am	John Barker
Vigil	St Joseph	5pm	Brian & Susan Towns RIP
	St Bede	5pm	Maureen Joslin (nee Casey) RIP
Sunday 24 December 4th Sunday of Advent	St John Boste	9:30am	John Frazer
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am	Terry & Brendan Ford & James McDevitte RIP
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Jim Walker
Christmas Eve Vigil	St Bede	5pm	William & Eileen Harland & Deceased Family
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	5.30pm	Ann Smith RIP & Deceased Family
	St Joseph	6pm	Our Parish Family
	St John Boste	7pm	The Bartley & McGee Families
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	7.30pm	Dave Ranaghan
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11.30pm	The People of the Parish

First Reading: Good News: Isaiah 61:1-2,10-11

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. 'I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity, like a bridegroom wearing his wreath, like a bride adorned in her jewels. 'For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will the Lord make both integrity and praise spring up in the sight of the nations.'

Response to the Psalm: My soul rejoices in my God.

Second reading: Joy in the Lord: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus. Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil. May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor. Alleluia!

The Gospel: A Voice Crying in the Desert: John 1:6-8,19-28

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light. This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord.' Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

A Voice Crying in the Desert

So, John the Baptist came as a witness to the light. In today's gospel reading he seems rather to refuse witness. He is quite negative, answering with a stalwart and repeated 'No!'. He witnesses only that 'There is one standing among you whom you do not know'. It is not always easy to find Jesus. All the way through the Gospel of John there are misunderstandings about Jesus; people fail to recognise him for what he is: there's the Samaritan at the well, Nicodemus in the night, Mary Magdalene beside the empty tomb, even Peter and the disciples as they fish on the Lake. We can easily become so wrapped up in our own troubles and worries that we fail to recognise the one figure who can provide the solution to them, although he is standing among us, the one who 'has the words of eternal life'. He may come to us in a way we do not like, as a corrective - blocking or diverting the way we have chosen. He may come as suffering, disappointment, failure or bereavement. All of these may be acts of God's love, to show us the way, though we cannot see it at the time. It is just like John the Baptist, saying steadily 'No!', until eventually we turn around and see Christ as our true light. **How can I find Jesus in the crowded events of my busy life? He often comes in unexpected ways. Is he in the quiet voice of a friend? Is he in the anger of someone I have annoyed? Is he in the rebuke of someone who knows me better than I know myself? Is he in my failures and frustrations?**

© Copyright 2023 The Wednesday Word Trust

Masses are live-streamed daily at 10am everyday, except Monday when Mass is live-streamed at 7pm

Please click the link <https://www.churchservices.tv/penshaw> to view from one of our Churches.

In addition, we live-stream Mass from St Joseph's, Birtley on: Tuesday at 7pm; Thursday at 12 Noon; Saturday at 5pm.

To access live streaming from St Joseph's Birtley, please click the link <https://www.churchservices.tv/birtley>.

What's On in the Parish

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Our Lady Queen of Peace Church is open on Friday afternoons from 2pm - 3pm for quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. All are welcome.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available in all of our Churches after Mass as follows:

Our Lady Queen of Peace on Thursday morning.

St John Boste on Friday morning.

Our Blessed Lady Immaculate on Saturday morning.

St Bede's on Saturday evening.

Advent Kindness Calendars - Unfortunately the two kindness calendars given out in all of the churches last weekend were copies of last year's rather than the new one I designed for this year. Please accept my apologies for this error. Copies of the correct kindness calendars will be available at the back of each church this weekend. Chris O'Neill

Advent Reflections - The dedicated Advent reflection page on the diocesan website can be found [here](#).

"The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me." Like Isaiah in today's first reading, could you be anointed to serve as a priest of God? Speak to your Parish Priest or contact the Vocations Promoter: 01207 299 012 or [email](#)

St Bede's - Christmas Tree Service - Wednesday 20th December during 10am mass. Tags to remember loved ones are available in Church porch. Donations to Water Aid/Ukraine/Gaza are welcome.

Donations of green foliage such as, holly, ivy etc for church decoration are greatly appreciated.

MASSSES ON CHRISTMAS DAY

The following shows the Mass times and venues for Christmas Day. Please note the changes from the usual Mass times.

9am St Bede Washington

9.30am Our Lady Queen of Peace

10am St Joseph Birtley

10.15am St John Boste, Washington

Christmas Midnight Mass

If any singers in the parish would like to meet before Christmas to prepare music for the service please contact Michael Leckenby tel: 07981396544 or email mvleckenby@yahoo.com

Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible - A Bible Study Course

Running for 9 Weeks - Many Catholics want to read the Bible but get bogged down by the long stretches that seem not to make sense or get lost among the sea of Old Testament names and places. Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible, an eight-part Bible study, helps you uncover the story woven throughout Scripture, so you can get the "big picture" of the Bible and understand what it's all about. Aided by a unique color-coded Bible Timeline Chart that arranges the key people, places, and events of the Bible in chronological order, Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible will help you pick up the Bible with confidence and understand how you fit into God's plan. Our Parish will begin the Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible study on **Thursday 25th January at 7pm in Our Lady Queen of Peace's Hall**. Participants will meet every week to view an engaging video presentation followed by a time of lively group discussion and fellowship. **Please bring a Catholic Bible!** For more information please ring 0191-4163583 or [click here](#).

Advent Penitential Service - Thursday 21 December at 7pm at St Bede's. Several Priests will be available to hear Confessions in our preparation for Christmas.

Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Woman's Guild - Our Annual toy collection was a huge success. A special thank you to all who donated a gift. Your help and support is very much appreciated. Thank you. Margaret Long.

Tuesday Night Holy Rosary - Prayers for the people of the Holy Land. Please join us at 6.40pm on Tuesdays at St Joseph's Birtley, to pray the great prayer of the rosary for all sides in the conflict in Palestine.

SVP Coat Collection - Please continue to donate any coats you no longer need and we will pass them to local charities who are able to distribute them to those in need. Thank you.

Olof Club - The OLOF Club will meet as usual in the Emmaus Room on 19 December.

Christmas Eve Carol Services

St Bede, Carols from 4.30pm, Mass at 5pm.

St Joseph, Birtley, Carols from 5.30pm, Mass at 6pm.

St John Boste, Carols from 6.30pm, Mass at 7pm.

Our Lady Queen of Peace, Carols from 7pm, Mass at 7.30pm.

Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, Carols from 11pm, Mass at 11.30pm.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School - The Christmas Newsletter is available by [clicking here](#).

Monday Mass at St Bede's - As from Monday 4 December there will be a morning Mass each week at 10am at St Bede's.

SVP 200 Club Xmas Draw - First Prize £100, No 188, Congratulations to Mary Thomas. Second Prize £50 No 103.

Sick and Housebound in the Parish - Fr Martin and Fr Luke are very happy to visit any sick or housebound parishioner with the Sacraments. The Sacrament of Holy Anointing and Confession can be a great help in such circumstances. Please contact the Priests if you know of anyone who would appreciate a visit. Clergy landline: 0191 6498257.

Other News

Holy Island SVP Camp - Are you interested in your child having a holiday in 2024? Let them join us for a week on Holy Island. They'll stay in our Centre and be looked after by DBS checked and trained helpers who will ensure they have a safe, fun time. We do lots of interesting and enjoyable activities such as rock pooling, longball, football, rounders, walking, craft and art, table tennis, quizzes and competitions and marathons as well as laser tag, silly sports, sand castle building, swimming and scavenger hunts.

Girls and boys can be aged 9-12 and it is a great way for them to meet new people and make friends from all over the North East. A week's all-inclusive holiday costs a donation of £150 and can be paid in instalments. In some circumstances children may be able to receive partial or full funding to attend. If you're interested, or know of a child who could benefit from such a holiday, please visit our website for further [details](#). Applications open NOW.

YMT led Confirmation Retreat at the Emmaus Village - January 26 – 28 2024 - There are still places for your Confirmation group to join other Confirmation candidates across the Diocese in exploring our faith, the Church, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In this YMT led Confirmation Retreat, there will be time for fun, faith, and food during these days of retreat. If you are a catechist and want to book your group, please contact nsalked@ymt.org before January 19, 2024.

Youth Ministry Conference – February 3 2024 - This Youth Ministry and Practical Theology Conference is YMT's first conference since the COVID-19 pandemic and we look forward to gather with youth ministers, catechists, clergy, teachers, staff and volunteer co-workers from across the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and beyond! The theme for the conference is "Investing in the Fearlessness of Youth", inspired by a quote from Pope Francis' letter, Christus Vivit (Chapter 7 no. 233). We hope you can join us for this Youth Ministry Conference. Booking is now open and you can either email nsalked@ymt.org or book online here: www.ticketsource.co.uk/youthministryteam. Online booking will apply booking fees. For more information about the conference visit www.ymt.org/ymt-conference

Vacancies – Opportunities to work at the Emmaus Village - The Emmaus Village, home for the Youth Ministry Team, hosts all the residential retreats led by YMT for our Diocesan Primary and Secondary Schools. It also offers catering and hospitality to the biggest gathering of Catholic Schools, the YMT Summer Festivals, students named it "God Camp". With this we are looking for an Assistant Catering Coordinator and Kitchen Technician, who will help our catering team deliver this valuable service to all the groups that come to the Emmaus Village. If you or someone you know, wants to be part of the YMT team, please contact admin@ymt.org or click the link www.ymt.org/vacancies for more information with regards to our vacancies.

Leprosy Centenary Holy Mass at Westminster Cathedral, 26th January 2024 - Leprosy invites you to Westminster Cathedral for a Holy Mass to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the charity. Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton Diocese and Chair of the Bishops' Conference Department for International Affairs. **Friday 26 January 2024 at 2.30pm.** Please join them as they give thanks for the centenary and the charity's international work in finding, diagnosing and treating people affected by leprosy. For more information please [click here](#)

Holocaust Commemoration 2024: 'Fragility of Freedom' - The Interreligious Relations Team will be holding their annual Holocaust Commemoration on Tuesday 23 January 2024 at 7.00pm. The venue is St Mary's Catholic School, Benton Park Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE7 7PE. The guest speaker is Mrs Deanna Van Der Velde from the United Hebrew Congregation. Booking for the Holocaust commemorations is essential, so please book your place by [clicking here](#) or call 0191 243 3316.

Thank you from Significance - The Trustees of Significance thank everyone who supported the Grand Draw and all those who donated prizes. 1,606 tickets were sold which realised £8,030. The funds raised will help Significance to continue to support the Emmaus Village and provide opportunities for young people to recognise their own worth and value. Congratulations to all our winners: Danielle Dowson (St John's Catholic School, Bishop Auckland), Jamie Adams (St Mary's Cathedral), Sr Hilda (Oaklea Convent), Sarah Boyd (Dunston, Gateshead).

Little Sisters of the Poor - Job Vacancies - Exciting opportunities are now available at St Joseph's Care Home (Little Sisters of the Poor, Newcastle) for care assistants and nurses. Hours available: Care Assistant: Shifts are 8am-3pm, 3pm-9pm. Nurse: Shifts are 8am-4pm, 1pm-9pm. Excellent rates of pay. For more information please contact Lee-Marie Thornley on 07856256095 or [click here](#).

Reflections

Diocesan Weekly reflections can be found by [clicking here](#).

Examen - Please follow the links to go to Pray as You Go: [Saturday Examen](#)
[3rd Sunday of Advent](#)

Catholic Social Teaching

For the Newsletter, [click here](#).

Prayers - If you would like to request prayers from the parish community for someone who is sick, or recently deceased, please click on the links below and complete the necessary forms. This will enable their names to be included in private prayer and during various Masses.

[For Prayers for the Sick](#)

[For Prayers for the Deceased](#)

or ring 0191 4163583

Finance - Standing Order forms and Gift Aid forms are available by clicking on the following links:

[For St John XXIII](#) [For St Joseph's](#)

or ring 0191 4163583.

Sick and Recently

Deceased - To view the sick and recently deceased list [please click here](#).

Parish Newsletter If you have any comments you wish to make about the Parish Newsletter, [please click here](#).

For the latest information, please go to any of the following Websites:

[Parish of St John XXIII](#)

[Parish of St Joseph's](#)

[Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle](#)

All the Links you will ever need!

Please [click here](#) or Scan the QR Code with your mobile phone to go to a site containing All the Links You'll Ever Need.



[To post a notice on this Newsletter, please click here](#)