

Partnership Dean: Fr. Christopher Warren

Partnership Chair: Mr. Joe Ronan

Website: [www.heavenfieldpartnership.org.uk](http://www.heavenfieldpartnership.org.uk)

Telephone: 01434 603119

Email: [admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk](mailto:admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk)

## PARTNERSHIP MID-WEEK UPDATE

Date: 14th July 2020

### CONTACT DETAILS:

#### ST. ELIZABETH'S, MINSTERACRES

Fr. Edwin Jenish (Rector)

Rev. David Collins

Telephone:

01434 673248

email:

[info@minsteracres.org](mailto:info@minsteracres.org)

Website:

[www.minsteracres.org/st-elizabeth](http://www.minsteracres.org/st-elizabeth)

#### ST. MARY'S, HEXHAM

Fr. Christopher Warren

Rev. Martin Bell

Parish Secretary:

Mrs. Judith Chaffey

Telephone:

01434 603119

email:

[admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk](mailto:admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk)

Website:

[www.stmaryshexham.org.uk](http://www.stmaryshexham.org.uk)

#### ST. JOHN OF BEVERLEY, HAYDON

BRIDGE & ST. WILFRID'S,

HALTWHISTLE

Telephone:

01434 603119

email:

[admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk](mailto:admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk)

Websites:

[www.stjohnshaydonbridge.com](http://www.stjohnshaydonbridge.com)

[www.rcchurchhaltwhistle.co.uk](http://www.rcchurchhaltwhistle.co.uk)

#### ST. OSWALD'S, BELLINGHAM

Telephone:

01434 603119

email:

[admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk](mailto:admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk)

Website:

[www.stoswaldsbellingham.org.uk](http://www.stoswaldsbellingham.org.uk)



### FINAL ISSUE OF PARTNERSHIP MID-WEEK UPDATE

Now that the lockdown situation is easing, and there is less news which requires immediate circulation, this will be the final issue of the Mid-Week Update from the Heavenfield Partnership of Parishes.

However, the regular, weekly Newsletters will still be produced and circulated as usual within our parishes.

### PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS AT SAINT MARY'S

Following on from the success of the Masses held last Sunday, there will continue to be three Sunday Masses celebrated each weekend, with a congregation, in our largest church, Saint Mary's at Hexham. **Holy Mass will be celebrated at 17:30 Saturday Evening, 09:30 and 10:30 on Sunday.** The 10:30 Mass will be live-streamed on the Internet.

Also, beginning next week, there will be a publicly celebrated Mass held on **Tuesday and Thursday mornings, at 9:30am.** As our Sunday obligation has not yet been reinstated, it is hoped that people will attend these Masses and so leave places available at our Sunday Masses for those who have to work or who are otherwise unable to attend Mass during the week. These weekday Masses will not be live-streamed.

Places at all of these Masses should be booked in advance, either by telephoning the Parish Office (01434 603119), or by using the online booking portal on Saint Mary's website ([www.stmaryshexham.org.uk](http://www.stmaryshexham.org.uk)). The booking portal opens at 11:00 am each Tuesday morning.

As our Sunday obligation has not yet been reinstated, it is hoped that people will attend the weekday Masses and so leave places available at our Sunday Masses for those who have to work or who are otherwise unable to attend Mass during the week.

Please remember that all of our publicly celebrated Masses are **open to everyone**, and not just parishioners of Saint Mary's.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR DEACONS

Each week, one of our Permanent Deacons will provide a topical reflection for us to consider. This week, Deacon Martin Bell writes:



Sunday gone was a day of mixed blessings. We had the first celebration of the Eucharist with a congregation for nigh on four months. It was wonderful to see people once more, from a socially safe distance, with hands washed and sanitised. Coming together to celebrate and praise God in Word and in Sacrament was a moment of deep joy: for those of us present, our long Eucharistic fast was over. Yet ... a moment tinged with sadness, emptiness. Looking down into the body of the church, seeing only 30 or so people there, I thought of those Fr Christopher and myself would normally see, but who weren't there. I thought of all those still at home, across our various partnership parishes, still in their Eucharistic fast, still hungering for the Lord, sacramentally. Not having my own family present was painful. Talking to one or two afterwards, the words 'strange', 'emotional', 'it's a start', were the feelings being shared.

Yes, it is a start, a small step towards some sort of normality: but there is a long way to go, we are not out of the woods yet. I found being at the Masses on Sunday very difficult but, then again, I have found the whole period of lockdown and distancing from church very difficult, full stop. This has been a real challenge to my faith. I'm not embarrassed or ashamed to share this, neither am I seeking a sympathy vote! The inner turmoil I'm experiencing is a wonderful opportunity to stop and reflect on life and faith. I know quite a few people who have said similarly.

I know some people who have drawn on their firm faith throughout this pandemic, drawing on their deep wells of faith resources, prayer, scripture, Lectio Divina, meditation or the Rosary, to cope with the absence of the Church's sacramental life. Praise be to God for such people, for they have a lot to be thankful for. I also know some people for whom this has been a desert time, the absence from the Church's sacramental life an expression of a, seemingly, inner absence of God from their lives. Thanks be to God for such people, for we have a lot to give praise for. God has been close to us all, whether our faith has been strong or weak of late. If we are in this latter camp, then we need not worry, as the second reading for this coming Sunday reminds us: 'The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means' (Romans 8: 26-27).

The Holy Spirit is alive and well in our church, our society and our faith. We need not worry or fear. The Holy Spirit knows the depths of our being, and can express our deep desire for God to God, even when, especially when, we struggle to find the right words to express what we think, how we feel. We just need to have the courage to be honest with the Holy Spirit, to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to find the right words for when we approach the God of love and mercy who desires us.

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As we move forward over the coming months, I think we need to trust more and more in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We need to remember what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit: 'the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything' (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit will enlighten us, guide us, inform us and teach us all that we need to know, to help us become more fully the children of God. We must 'guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us' (2 Timothy 1: 14).

If we're wondering where our good treasures lie, then the various celebrations from this week's liturgical calendar help us to realise that the Holy Spirit can drive us to do great things.

We began the week with St Henry (973 - 1024): born in Bavaria in 973 he succeeded to the dukedom at the age of 22. A learned and pious soul, Henry was an amiable yet eminently sober man, endowed with practical common sense, and reasonable. This prudence he combined with energy and conscientiousness. He became Holy Roman Emperor in 1014. He was noted for his support for the reform of the Church and for his encouragement of its missionary activity. He set up many bishoprics, and he and his wife Cunegunda founded many monasteries. He died in 1024 and was canonized by Pope Eugenius III in 1146. From the first reading for the Mass for St Henry comes that beautiful, yet challenging, quotation from the prophet Micah (6:8): 'What the Lord asks you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God'. May St Henry inspire us to do just this.

On Tuesday we remembered Saint Camillus of Lellis (1550 - 1614). He was born in Italy of a noble family but his mother died when he was a child, and he grew up absolutely neglected. He became a soldier but his taste for gambling and riotous living eventually lost him everything: reminiscent of the younger son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He obtained employment in the Hospital for Incurables. He was prompted to go there chiefly by the hope of a cure of the abscesses in both his feet from which he had been long suffering. He was dismissed from the hospital on account of his quarrelsome disposition and his passion for gambling. Following another period as a soldier, he was employed by the Capuchins at Manfredonia, on a new building which they were erecting. His old gambling habit still pursued him, but at the age of 25 he converted as the result of hearing a sermon (not asking if it was by a priest or a deacon). He twice tried to join the Capuchin friars but was rejected because of his poor health. He was admitted to the order as a lay brother, but was soon dismissed on account of his infirmity. Having had experience of hospitals from the inside, he determined to improve them, and he devoted the rest of his life to the care of the sick. He offered himself to the hospital of San Giacomo in Rome and eventually became its bursar. He introduced many reforms and founded a congregation of priests and lay brothers, the Servants of the Sick (later known as the Camillians) to serve the sick both spiritually and physically. He was ordained priest in 1584. He resigned as head of his congregation in 1607 but continued to look after and visit the sick almost until the day of his death. Both the first reading (1 John 3: 14-18) and the Gospel (John 15: 9-17) contain the word 'love', repeated fourteen times in total, with the invitation that 'our love is not just to be words or mere talk, but something real and active' (1 John 3: 18). We remember those brothers and priests who served as Camillians in our community for many years, letting their love for the sick and vulnerable be a living witness to us all. God can use any of us, in spite of our human frailties and weaknesses, drawing on our giftedness in silence and prayer, to be his children. We pray this week for those who live with any form of addiction.

On Thursday 16th July we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Holy Scripture celebrates the beauty of Mount Carmel, where the prophet Elijah defended Israel's pure faith in the living God. In the 12th/13th century some hermits took up residence on this mountain and eventually set up the Carmelite Order, which is dedicated to living a contemplative life under the patronage of the Holy Mother of God.

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From the first reading the prophet Zechariah invites all humankind to 'be silent before the Lord' (Zechariah 2: 13). We pray for the Carmelites, for the witness they and all contemplatives give, encouraging us to the joy of silence, so that God, who loves us, can speak to the depths of our heart.

The day before, on the 15th July, we celebrated the memorial of St Bonaventure (1218 - 1274). Bonaventure became a Franciscan in 1243 and studied philosophy and theology at the University of Paris. He became a famous teacher and philosopher, part of the extraordinary intellectual flowering of the 13th century. He was a contemporary of St Thomas Aquinas.

At this time the friars were still a new and revolutionary force in the Church, and their radical embracing of poverty and rejection of institutional structures raised suspicion and opposition from many quarters. Bonaventure defended the Franciscan Order and, after he was elected general of the order in 1255, he ruled it with wisdom and prudence. He is regarded as the second founder of the Order.

He declined the archbishopric of York in 1265 but was made cardinal bishop of Albano in 1273, dying a year later in 1274 at the Council of Lyons, at which the Greek and Latin churches were (briefly) reconciled.

Bonaventure wrote extensively on philosophy and theology, making a permanent mark on intellectual history; but he always insisted that the simple and uneducated could have a clearer knowledge of God than the wise. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1588 by Pope Sixtus V.

From the first reading of the Mass for St Bonaventure we hear poetic words from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God' (Ephesians 3: 17-19).

May the example of all these men and women, fellow travellers on the journey of life and faith, just like any one of us, seeking the love of God in our lives, be an inspiration and a source of enlightenment to us, so that we can, again referring to St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, join with them in praising Father, Son and Spirit: 'Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever.' (Ephesians 3: 20-21).

Amen to that!

**Deacon Martin**

### **PLEASE PRAY FOR THE RECENTLY DECEASED**

- **Anne Therese Pickering**, from Oakwood, who died on 4th July. Anne's Funeral will take place on Thursday 16th July, at Saint Andrew's Cemetery, Hexham.

***Requiesce in Pace***

### **GOOD NEWS FOR OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

The Evening Chronicle's Real Schools Guide has recently announced that five of the top ten schools in the region are Catholic schools.

To read the full article and find out how our local schools performed, please access [www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/top-10-schools-north-east-18551729](http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/top-10-schools-north-east-18551729)

## SAINTS' DAYS THIS WEEK



### Tuesday 14th July: Saint Camillus de Lellis

(1550 - 1614) He was born in Italy of a noble family. He became a soldier but his taste for gambling and riotous living eventually lost him everything. At the age of 25 he converted as the result of hearing a sermon. He twice tried to join the Capuchin friars but was rejected because of his poor health. Having had experience of hospitals from the inside, he determined to improve them, and he devoted the rest of his life to the care of the sick. He offered himself to the hospital of San Giacomo in Rome and eventually became its bursar. Hospitals then were filthy, and hospital staff were brutal and inadequate. Camillus introduced many reforms and founded a congregation of priests and lay brothers, the Servants of the Sick (later known as the Camillians) to serve the sick both spiritually and physically. He was ordained priest in 1584. He resigned as head of his congregation in 1607 but continued to look after and visit the sick almost until the day of his death.

### Wednesday 15th July: Saint Bonaventure

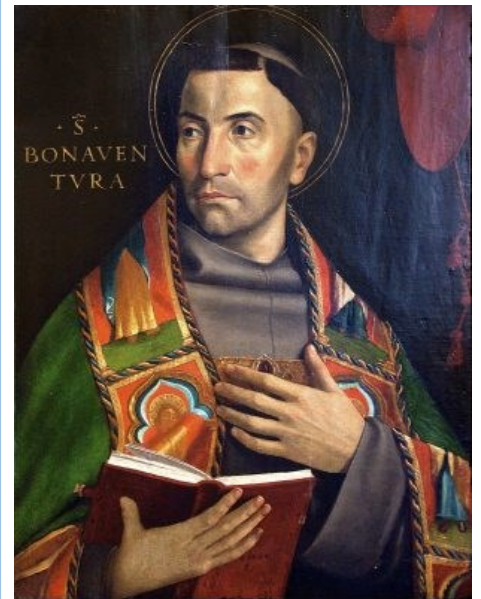
Bonaventure was born at Bagnoregio in Etruria in about 1218. He became a Franciscan in 1243 and studied philosophy and theology at the University of Paris. He became a famous teacher and philosopher, part of the extraordinary intellectual flowering of the 13th century. He was a friend and colleague of St Thomas Aquinas.

At this time the friars were still a new and revolutionary force in the Church, and their radical embracing of poverty and rejection of institutional structures raised suspicion and opposition from many quarters. Bonaventure defended the Franciscan Order and, after he was elected general of the order in 1255, he ruled it with wisdom and prudence. He is regarded as the second founder of the Order.

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### Thursday 16th July: Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Holy Scripture celebrates the beauty of Mount Carmel, where the prophet Elijah defended Israel's pure faith in the living God. In the 12th century, some hermits took up residence on this mountain and eventually set up the Carmelite Order, which is dedicated to living a contemplative life under the patronage of the Holy Mother of God