

ST. JOHN'S
HAYDON BRIDGE

ST. MARY'S
HEXHAM

ST. OSWALD'S
BELLINGHAM



SUNDAY NEWSLETTER

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

SUNDAY 24TH JANUARY 2021 | SUNDAY CYCLE: B | WEEKDAYS: I
LITURGY OF THE HOURS: WEEK 2

SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

CLERGY

Fr Christopher Warren

Fr James Dunne

Rev. Deacon Martin Bell

PARISH OFFICE

01434 603119

Mon-Thurs. 9:00 - 13:00

CONTACT

stmaryshexham.org.uk

admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk

MASSES THIS WEEK

Saturday (Vigil)	23rd Jan	10:30	Live-Streamed Hexham	Catherine Charlton
Sunday	24th Jan	10:30	Live-Streamed Hexham	Beryl Reeves
Monday	25th Jan	11:30	Live-Streamed Hexham	Requiem Mass: Jeffrey Peter Clavell Bate
Tuesday	26th Jan	18:00	Live-Streamed Hexham	Margaret Armstrong
Wednesday	27th Jan	18:00		No Mass this week
Thursday	28th Jan	18:00		No Mass this week
Friday	29th Jan			No Mass this week
Saturday	30th Jan	10:30	Live-Streamed Hexham	John Daniels RIP
Sunday	31st Jan	10:30	Live-Streamed Hexham	Malcolm Woodhall

PLEASE KEEP CHECKING THE WEBSITE (www.stmaryshexham.org.uk) FOR FURTHER
UPDATES AND ADDITIONS TO THIS SCHEDULE

LIVE STREAMED MASSES

There is a cost to providing our live streamed Masses.
If you would like to make a contribution to making
possible this service for everyone, please let the Parish
Office know (admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk).

MASS AT MINSTERACRES

Sunday Mass is celebrated at Minsteracres at
08:30 and at 10:30, whilst Daily Mass is
celebrated at 08:30.
Please book in advance.

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc, et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.*

MASS TODAY

First Reading: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 24 (25): 4-6, 7-9

Response is:

Let me make known your ways..

Second Reading:

I Corinthians 7: 29-31

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

*The kingdom of God is close at hand:
repent, and believe the Good News.*

Alleluia!

Gospel: Mark 1: 14-20

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION TO BE PRAYED WHEN WE ARE PREVENTED FROM RECEIVING THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart. I
embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You. Never
permit me to be separated from You. *Amen.*

REFLECTION

Think back to the first time you fell in love, not a crush but true love. The emotional, spiritual, intellectual connection was undoubtedly strong and probably seemed like it would last forever. That's also the way the love songs often sing of it. Yet, those initial stages inevitably recede and the grind of daily life looms larger. At that point the love may have developed into something deeper, stronger. Or perhaps it died out altogether and is now only a happy memory.

Something similar often happens with a faith life, and the Disciples were not immune to this. Today we hear the story about how they started out strong, abandoning everything to follow Jesus. We know that Simon Peter will eventually confess Jesus as the Christ. And later, Peter will deny three times that he even knows him. The relationship that starts out with such promise, even reaching soaring heights, can truly crash and burn. This happened with the Disciples; it can happen with us.

Our faith life might start out strong. It might need to be rekindled from time to time. We might need to go to the well of that initial experience of falling in love to draw sustenance and inspiration. And yet, there may be times when we effectively hang it up or abandon it, as Peter did. In those times we know that Jesus still sought Peter. Peter was forgiven and brought back into the fold. There will be another example later in this Gospel of a disciple who abandoned Jesus and did not seek forgiveness. His end was not like Peter's. our living relationship with Christ is not a one-time exhilarating moment, but, like all relationships, it is a lifelong give and take, wax and wane, love and be loved.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE RECENTLY DECEASED

- **JEFF BATE**, from Hexham, who passed away on 8th January. Jeff's Requiem Mass will be held at Saint Mary's at on Monday 25th January.
- **ROGER SPEIRS**, from Corbridge, who died on 10th January. Roger's Requiem Mass will be held at Saint Mary's on Monday 1st February.
- **BERYL DORRITY** from Corbridge, formerly of Haydon Bridge, who died on 14th January. Beryl's Funeral Service will be held at Saint Mary's on Wednesday 3rd February.
- **THOMAS SAMUEL SPROUL** from Broughty Ferry (Fr. Christopher's uncle) who died on 18th January

Please pray for the Repose of the Souls of Jeff, Roger, Beryl and Tom as well as their families and close friends.

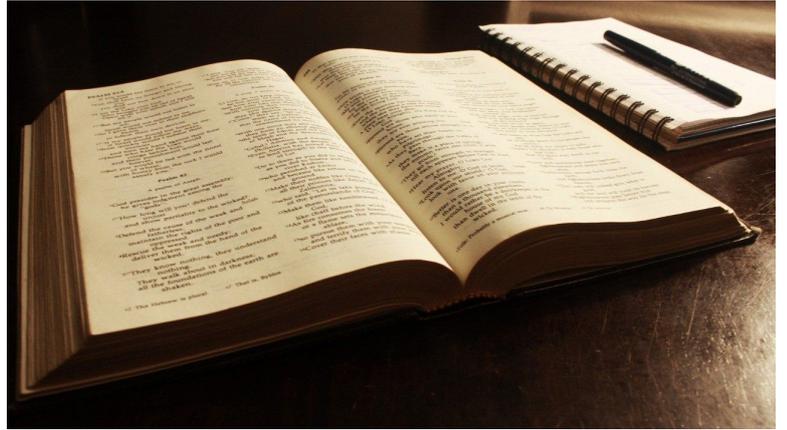
Requiesce in Pace

Please note - current regulations mean that there is a limit of 30 people at each Requiem Mass or Funeral Service. These people will be invited by the respective families, which means that these Services are not currently open to the public. If you would like to attend a Requiem Mass or Funeral Service, please contact the relevant Funeral Director, or the family of the deceased.

TODAY IS THE SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

On September 30, 2019, on the liturgical memorial of St. Jerome, Pope Francis announced that the **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time** would be celebrated as **The Sunday of the Word of God**. This was instituted in the inspiring Apostolic Letter "*Aperuit illis*"

The Pope intended this to be a day dedicated to the celebration, reflection and dissemination of the Word.



Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16)

SAINT JEROME ...

*Is a good example to us
"for the great love he had
for the Word of God."*

In the *Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass*, we are reminded of the role of the Word of God in the life of the Church:

"In the hearing of God's word the Church is built up and grows, and in the signs of the liturgical celebration God's wonderful, past works in the history of salvation are presented anew as mysterious realities. God in turn makes use of the congregation of the faithful that celebrates the Liturgy in order that his word may speed on and be glorified and that his name be exalted among the nations.

Whenever, therefore, the Church, gathered by the Holy Spirit for liturgical celebration, announces and proclaims the word of God, she is aware of being a new people in whom the covenant made in the past is perfected and fulfilled. Baptism and confirmation in the Spirit have made all Christ's faithful into messengers of God's word because of the grace of hearing they have received. They must therefore be the bearers of the same word in the Church and in the world, at least by the witness of their lives.

The word of God proclaimed in the celebration of God's mysteries does not only address present conditions but looks back to past events and forward to what is yet to come. Thus God's word shows us what we should hope for with such a longing that in this changing world our hearts will be set on the place where our true joys lie."



THE IMPORTANCE OF SACRED SCRIPTURE IN OUR LIVES

In 2019, a note released by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and signed by the prefect, Cardinal Robert Sarah, explains that The Sunday of the Word of God is a means to help people "*reawaken an awareness of the importance of Sacred Scripture for our lives as believers, beginning with its resonance in the liturgy which places us in living and permanent dialogue with God.*"

PUBLICLY CELEBRATED MASSES ARE NOW TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

After much thought and deliberation backed up by many prayers to the Holy Spirit, and being mindful of the current growth of infections due to Covid-19, Fr. Christopher and Fr. Jim have taken the sad decision to **SUSPEND THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS WITHIN ALL OF OUR CHURCHES, EFFECTIVE FROM MONDAY 18TH JANUARY 2021, UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.** This decision is in-line with advice received from the Diocesan Health and Safety Department, and also considers what is happening elsewhere in our Diocese. The situation will be continually reviewed, and publicly-celebrated Masses will resume as soon as it is considered safe to do so.

In the meantime, **Mass will be live-streamed from Saint Mary's** as outlined on page 1 of this newsletter. Please keep checking the website (www.stmaryshexham.org.uk) for further updates and/or additions or alterations to this schedule. Your understanding in this matter is greatly appreciated.



During these times when our churches are closed and masses are being streamed online, the Diocese of Middlesbrough has set up a system to allow people who do not have internet access to listen to Mass over the telephone.

Please pass on details of this service to people who you may know from other parishes, and also to people who do not have internet access.

Many thanks.

KEEP IN TOUCH!

Would you like to keep up to date with all changes and updates as well as receiving the Weekly Newsletter? If so, make sure that you forward your contact details to the Parish Office (admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk or 01434 603119).

IF YOU CHANGE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS, PLEASE LET THE PARISH OFFICE KNOW, SO THAT YOUR RECORD CAN BE UPDATED AND YOU CONTINUE TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATIONS.

CORONAVIRUS PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, you travelled through towns and villages curing every disease and illness. At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their health and strength.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents neighbours from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Good Lord, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

May those who have died from the virus rest in peace and rise in glory.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with prudence and charity for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve.

Stay with us, Lord, and grant us your peace.

Amen.

Our Lady, Health of the Sick, pray for us!

Saint Joseph, pray for us!

Saint Roch, pray for us!

God is the best
doctor and
Prayer is the best
medicine.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Will take place this year on **Monday 25th January**. The theme for this year's event is "**Be a Light in the Darkness**".

Each year, Holocaust Memorial events take place around 27th January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz Camp. These annual events enable us to remember, for a purpose. It gives us a responsibility to work for a safer, better future for everyone. It encourages everyone to 'step up' and use their talents to tackle prejudice, discrimination and intolerance wherever we encounter them.

Due to current Covid-19 restrictions, the Diocesan Department for Interreligious Relations is unable to hold the annual commemorations in the two nominated Diocesan schools. Instead, an online event will take place, and can be viewed via www.rcdhn.org.uk/interfaith/interfaithconf.php This joint event will feature contributions from both schools as well as a witness testimony provided by cellist Anita Lasker Wallfisch, recalling her memories of playing in the Auschwitz Orchestra. Her grandson Simon, a cellist and tenor has also provided a recording of 'Kaddish,' the Jewish memorial prayer.

SAINTS DAYS AND FEAST DAYS THIS WEEK

- Monday 25th January - **The Conversion of Saint Paul**
- Tuesday 26th January - **Saints Timothy and Titus**
- Thursday 28th January - **Saint Thomas Aquinas**

ARE YOU AN ELDERLY OR VULNERABLE PARISHIONER?

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH SHOPPING OR HAVING PRESCRIPTIONS COLLECTED?

OR WOULD YOU JUST LIKE TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

If so, we have a team of willing volunteers, from all of our parishes, who are able to come to your aid. To access this help, in the first instance, please contact Saint Mary's Parish office (admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk or 01434 603119)

**Got questions?
Wondering about
God?
Spare time in
lockdown?**



for more information email
alpha@hexhamtrinity.org.uk

**Alpha for Hexham, on Zoom
starts on Tuesday 26th
January at 7:30pm**



THIS WEEK'S HOMILY FROM FATHER JIM

Third Sunday of Year B: *Vocation 2: What matters most: person or message?*

1st Reading: Jonah 3: 1-5+10: Second time round, Jonah's message actually works!

2nd Reading: I Corinthians 7: 29-31 : Paul's sense of urgency; but how realistic is he?

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20: Andrew, Simon, James & John become Jesus' disciples.

In some ways, this Sunday's Mass readings repeat last week's, with the theme of vocation. The difference is that this weekend, we are told the content of what they had to say to people. It can be summed up simply: 'Repent, and believe this message!' The word "repent" doesn't just mean "be sorry for your sins", or "do penance & good works" – as we tend to use the word in modern English. It had the sense of "turn your life round completely"; "make a fresh start", "do a U-turn" (like politicians, after big mistakes!) – that sort of thing.

So, when told to "repent", people can't just make a snap decision to say "Oops! Sorry!"; they are asked to think hard about their lives, then decide where they go next. This needs some serious time & prayer. The first reading tells of the prophet Jonah and his message to the people of Nineveh. I hope I don't shock you when I say that I feel the story is totally fictitious – it's a parable of how God's Word (or 'grace') overcomes the reluctance and faults of those ordained to preach it. You may remember that Jonah at first refused to go; he ran away to sea; the ship nearly sank (until Jonah was thrown overboard); he was swallowed by a sea-monster, which (rather conveniently) vomited him safely back on to a beach. Second time round, he agreed to go – and was a great success! – or at least, God's word was. The people accepted their need to 'repent' – and did so, from the King downwards. (The writer has no time for Jonah: he comes across as miserable & selfish - a bit like the Victor Meldrew character in *One Foot in the Grave*.) What mattered was that God's message was preached, and his 'grace' did the rest.

I suggest that all three readings are linked by a sense of urgency – some-thing that we can all feel in these difficult times, when there is a race between the vaccinations being rolled out and the rapid spread of the Covid-19 virus. Jonah warns the people: "Only 40 days more"; St Paul writes: "Brothers, our time is growing short"; Jesus says: "The time has come; the Kingdom of God is close at hand". There is a stress on timing in all 3 passages; the problem is that many people today don't feel the same urgency about spiritual matters that they feel about their financial or health issues. In particular, St Paul's idea that we should live as if we weren't married, had nothing to mourn for, were enjoying life, or being in business, etc, rings hollow with most people. They say that his teaching is unrealistic, making religion seem irrelevant to modern life.

I can sympathise with that – up to a point. When Paul wrote that letter, it was fairly early in his ministry, when it was believed that the "end of the world" would arrive at any moment. His later writings show a different style, in which he realises that we are in for the long haul, so we have to get on with a normal life, and make our faith relevant to what we have to do. This isn't a case of watering the faith down; it's simply accepting that the end of the world is a very long way off, and so, in the meantime, we must relate what we believe about Jesus to how we conduct our lives. For instance, I'm typing this on the Wednesday of Joe Biden's inauguration as President of the USA. He is a practising Catholic, who believes in the teachings of the Gospels and of our Church. He knows he can't force others to believe and behave as he does (that's democracy), but he hopes that his faith will benefit his relations with others. (That's practical Christianity.) I suggest that many Americans believe such a change in presidential style to be an "urgent" need for the USA at the moment!

What about us, now? I think that we must separate the essence of the message from our feelings about the person who delivers it. For example, St Paul has a bad 'image' these days because of his views about women's roles in church communities. But what he wrote was common 2000 years ago, right up to the early 20th century. His insights about our faith in Jesus are the very basis of Christianity. (Churchill had some very out-of-date views about industry and the British Empire - especially India - but he was an inspired war leader against Hitler.) As I wrote last week, the disciples had to be 'fishers of men (and women!)' – and that meant hard work, and the risk of unpopularity – as St Paul discovered, even then. What the preacher, teacher, priest, deacon, (or other church worker) must have is a good name, and reliability, because these go with the job. (Hence my personal horror at clerical scandals in recent decades.) We can't copy the popularity of TV personalities, but we should be respected for a life-style that matches the gospel we teach. All of us who work in or for the Church are weak human beings, but we must accept that the gospel message and people's faith in Jesus & his Church matter more than we do.

Fr Jim Dunne.

TREATY FOR PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

On an historic visit to the atomic bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2019, Pope Francis condemned the use and possession of nuclear weapons as immoral. He urged support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which 122 states, including the Vatican, voted to adopt at the United Nations in July 2017. **It is the first globally applicable agreement to outlaw nuclear weapons completely.** The Treaty prohibits nations from: developing, testing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening the use of nuclear weapons, or allowing them to be stationed on their territory.

The Vatican was among the first states to ratify the Treaty and now that over 50 states have ratified it, the treaty will enter into force on the **22nd January, 2021**.

This treaty challenges the status quo. The more countries that sign up the more pressure there will be on nuclear armed states to cease their illegal activities and comply with the treaty. Since the entry into force of other weapons treaties, such as landmine and cluster munitions, even countries that had not signed up have virtually ceased production of these weapons.

On the 22nd January we will celebrate the entry into force of the treaty. People in every part of the world have played a part in getting us this far. We call for a foreign policy directed towards disarmament rather than war. **We call on the UK government to sign the Treaty.** Along with the USA, Russia, China, France, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea they are holding on to their nuclear weapons and do not currently see disarmament as urgent. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the way forward.

MASS INTENTIONS

Would you like to have Holy Mass celebrated for a particular person or Intention? If your answer is yes, then please forward the details to Saint Mary's Parish Office (admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk or 01434 603119).

If you would like this Mass to be celebrated on a particular date, then you should give us as much notice as possible. Dates are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

It is traditional to make a monetary Offering when you request a Mass. The amount given is up to you, but should be according to your means. Details of how to make your Offering can be obtained from the Parish Office.

Many thanks.

LISTENING SERVICES

Although they are not currently paying routine visits at this time, you can still speak to one of our priests by telephoning: -

- Fr Christopher Warren (Saint Mary's Presbytery) – 01434 603119
- Fr James Dunne (Saint Oswald's Presbytery) - 01434 220262
- Fr Edwin Jenish (Minsteracres) – 01434 673248

Dedicated counsellors and listeners are also available at: -

- The Cathedral Listening Service – 0191 232 6953
- The Northumberland Listening Service – 07732 980740.

ORDO & NORTHERN CATHOLIC CALENDAR FOR 2021

The 2021 editions of these very useful reference sources are now available to buy, priced at £3.00 per copy.

If you would like to buy a copy of either of these books, please get in touch with Peter Softley (Bellingham), Gerry Green (Haydon Bridge), or please contact the Parish Office (01434 603119 or admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk)

SAINT THOMAS ACQUINAS

It is the Feast Day of Saint Thomas Aquinas on **Thursday 28th January 2021**.

He was born in 1225 to a noble family in southern Italy, and was educated by the Benedictines. In the normal course of events he would have joined that order and taken up a position suitable to his rank; but he decided to become a Dominican instead. His family were so scandalised by this disreputable plan that they kidnapped him and kept him prisoner for over a year; but he was more obstinate than they were, and he had his way at last.

He studied in Paris and in Cologne under the philosopher St Albert the Great. It was a time of great philosophical ferment. The writings of Aristotle, the greatest philosopher of the ancient world, had been newly rediscovered, and were becoming available to people in the West for the first time in a thousand years. Many feared that Aristotelianism was flatly contradictory to Christianity, and the teaching of Aristotle was banned in many universities at this time – the fact that Aristotle's works were coming to the West from mostly Muslim sources did nothing to help matters.

Into this chaos Thomas brought simple, straightforward sense. Truth cannot contradict truth: if Aristotle (the great, infallible pagan philosopher) appears to contradict Christianity (which we know by faith to be true), then either Aristotle is wrong or the contradiction is in fact illusory. And so Thomas studied, and taught, and argued, and eventually the simple, common-sense philosophy that he worked out brought an end to the controversy. Out of his work came many writings on philosophy and theology, including the *Summa Theologiae*, a standard textbook for many centuries and still an irreplaceable resource today. Out of his depth of learning came, also, the dazzling poetry of the liturgy for Corpus Christi. And out of his sanctity came the day when, celebrating Mass, he had a vision that, he said, made all his writings seem like so much straw; and he wrote no more.

Thomas died in 1274.

Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to inspire us, like Saint Thomas, to love God with our minds as well as our hearts; and if we come across a fact or a teaching that seems to us to contradict our faith, let us not reject it but investigate it: for the truth that it contains can never contradict the truth that is God.



Saint Thomas Aquinas

CONTACTING THE PARISH OFFICE

As you are aware, COVID restrictions mean that the **PARISH OFFICE IS TEMPORARILY CLOSED**.

However, you can still contact the office via email (preferred) or telephone (admin@stmaryshexham.org.uk or 01434 603119) If you need to send letters or documents to the office, we now have a **secure mail box**, which is **positioned outside on the wall to the left hand side of the Narthex door**.

Many thanks for your patience and understanding in this matter.

