

Prayer Intentions for the Sick

Craig Millward, Anne Holland, David Millward, David Noble, Clare Levy, Christine Rogers, Roxine Calow, Patrick Hulinson, Barbara Murphy, Florence Ward, Peggy Sugrue, Dale Broom, Jackie Berry, Bernard Holt, Patricia Greene, Bernadette Greene, Henry Marron and Johnny Falloon.

Prayer Intentions for the Dead

Recently Deceased: Federico Angiolini, Bernard Currie, Betty Morgan, Colin Kilduff, Mary O’Flaherty.

Anniversaries: Gerard and Mary Shepherd, Clive Lamb, Stanley and Agnes Holt, Alice McMullan, Ted Locker, Anne Scholes, Peter Stevens.

WISDOM FROM THE SAINTS

“In the evening of life you will be examined in Love.”

St John of the Cross

“Don’t let your hearts be disturbed. Am I not here—your Mother? Aren’t you under my mantle?”

Our Lady of Guadalupe.



“O Father, in your Truth—that is to say, in your Son, humbled, needy and homeless—you have humbled me. He was humbled in the womb of the Virgin, needy in the manger of the warmth of the sheep, and homeless on the wood of the Cross. Nothing so humbles the proud as the humility of Christ’s humanity—if we notice him again.”
St Anthony of Padua

	Last Week’s collection was: £926.60 Thank you	£££	The monthly figure for Standing Orders: £1366.00
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	This week, the Sacred Heart Lamp burns for the homeless.		This week, Our Lady’s Lamp burns for peace in Israel and Gaza.
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**OUR LADY OF GRACE
PARISH, PRESTWICH**

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SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday 10th December	Holy Masses 9am & 11am
Monday 11th December	Holy Mass 12 noon
Tuesday 12th December	Holy Mass 12 noon
Wednesday 13th December St Lucy	Requiem Bernard Currie 12 noon
Thursday 14th December St John of the Cross	Holy Mass 12 noon
Friday 15th December	Holy Mass 12 noon
Saturday 16th December	Exposition 11.30am-1pm Confessions 11.40am-12.50pm, 4-4.40pm Holy Mass 11am Vigil 5pm

Advent Service of Recollection and Healing

There will be a Service of Reconciliation and Healing for the parish, here at the church, this Tuesday, December 12th at 7pm. I've invited a priest friend of mine from the North East to come and speak, along with myself and two or three priests from nearby, to hear confessions and minister.

Christmas Fair and Raffle

A very big thank-you to everyone who helped with the parish fair and with the selling of raffle tickets. The fair went very well and it was lovely to see so many people milling around the stalls and enjoying themselves: lucky we just got finished before the snow came down at 4.30pm—how Christmasy!

The Fair made £3100.48 and the Raffle made £2460.48. So a grand total of £5560.48 was raised for parish funds. Thank you.

Christmas Choir Service

On Thursday 14th December at 6pm, Our Lady of Grace School will be holding a Christmas Choir Service in Church for parents and families.

Federico Angiolini

On Tuesday 5th December, peacefully, at Bury Hospice and fortified by the Rites of the Church, Federico passed away. His mother, father and brother were with him. Please keep him and his family in your prayers at this time. They have asked me to convey their gratitude to the parish for their support and prayers throughout Federico's illness. They are now seeking to repatriate his body so that they can celebrate his Requiem at home in Italy and bury him with his family. Please respect their privacy at this time.

The Big Listen

Four parish meetings have been arranged for the Big Listen Salford Synod.

- Thursday afternoon 14th December 2-4pm in the Cottage
- Thursday evening 4th January 7pm-9pm in the Hall
- Friday evening 5th January 7pm-9pm in the Hall
- Tuesday evening 9th January 7pm-9pm in the Cottage

EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO ATTEND ONE OF THESE MEETINGS

Hall Seating etc

The seating in the Hall has been reupholstered and looks much better. I'm happy to report that Keith Sutton, the former OLOG school caretaker, is now looking after our halls and gradually we hope to get on top of the hygiene, safety and upkeep of these facilities. Shortly, the drains to the lavatories will be re-rooted, a proper supply of hygiene products secured, and a new fire alarm system and WiFi installed.

Defences Down

Think of Edinburgh Castle: the raised ground and the solid, rock base that acts as a fortification. Or maybe Bamburgh Castle, with its steep wall and sea defences. Often, the castle keep is protected on a mountain top and from there any enemies can be seen. Think of villages dotted along a valley, safe from threat and sheltered from the weather. The authors of the Scriptures had minds rich with these wonderful images. Doesn't the Psalmist say, "In you, Lord, I take shelter, be a protecting rock for me, a walled fortress to save me. For you are my rock, my fortress." Doesn't he sing of a valley in which no evil will be feared?

What, then, must we think of Isaiah's imagery today: "Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill laid low. Let every cliff become a plain and the ridges a valley"? The images of rocks and mountains and valleys, which for most of human history have represented security, are suddenly swept away. In Isaiah's landscape, the human person is left vulnerable—exposed in a flat, dry wilderness.

But that's where the Prophet would have us be today, on this second, Advent Sunday: vulnerable and exposed. And St Paul is no different—reminding us of the thief who comes in the night—when the householder is most vulnerable; drowsy and in darkness.

Why does the Lord want to catch us in this state? Well, certainly not to do us any harm: Isaiah says we're to be without fear on that day and shout for joy because in that moment of vulnerability, when we're exposed and our defences are down—only then, will we truly hear the voice that's crying out in this desert: The joyful message of our salvation; that our sins are forgiven and our punishment lifted.

Getting our attention is a challenge for God. How many times does he have to ask us to listen!? Frustrated, Jesus says on one occasion: "I played the pipes for you and you wouldn't dance: sang dirges but you wouldn't listen." Determined not to hear, God has to manoeuvre us into a place of receptivity to his presence. And that's what he does in Advent. That's why his prophet has such unusual dress and diet. The food that goes into John the Baptist's mouth represents the message that comes out of his mouth: the arresting sting of the locust and the sweetness of the honey, is the perfect combination to get our attention.

We may not live in castles anymore—but we each have our fortifications. Hating to be vulnerable, we shore up our lives so securely that we're dependent on nobody but ourselves. No wonder only a thief can break the wall—that we only seem to listen when God uses the megaphone of pain and suffering. If we'd drop down our defences, it needn't be so hard—he comes to comfort his people with healing in his hand. Listen!