

PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE SICK
 Caroline Williams, Christine Rogers, Craig Millward, David Noble, Patrick Hullinson, Barbara Murphy, Florence Ward, Peggy Sugrue, Dale Broom, Jackie Berry, Bernard Holt, Patricia Greene, Bernadette Greene, Eileen Butt, Johnny Falloon, Carol Doherty, Frank Colgan, Marian Whyte, Blanche Pollard and Stephen King.

PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE DEAD
Recently Deceased: Robert Fenton, Peter Marsden, Eamon Burke, Joan Keeney, Alan Hibbert, Mary Hughes, Michael Shiers.
Anniversaries: Robert Francis Smith, Alice McMullan, Colette Maria Parnell, John Gallagher, Ellen gallagher, Mary Gallagher, Patrick Kelly, Annie Kelly, Anne Johnson, Elizabeth Robinson, Gerard Shepherd, Mary Shepherd.


WISDOM FROM THE SAINTS

“Anyone who wants to play with the Devil will not be able to rejoice with Christ.”
 St Peter Canisius

“At this Christmas, when Christ comes, will he find a warm heart? Mark the Season of Advent by loving others and making your heart warm.”
 St Teresa of Calcutta



ADVENT
 The whole of our life must be an advent, a vigilant waiting for the coming of Christ. Because the Lord is coming, always coming towards us. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognise him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent. The essential meaning of life is recognizing the coming of the Lord; where he touches our life each day.

	Last Week's collection was: £1091.75 Thank you	£££	The monthly figure for Standing Orders: £1380.00
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	This week, the Sacred Heart Lamp burns for those who are sick..		This week, Our Lady's Lamp burns for peace in our world.
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OUR LADY OF GRACE PARISH, PRESTWICH

PARISH PRIEST Fr. PHILIP CALDWELL
PLACEMENT SEMINARIAN MARK McGEEHAN
 11, Fairfax Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 1AS
 Tel: 0161 773 2324

Website: ourladyofgrace.co.uk
 Email: philip.caldwell@dioceseofsalford.org.uk
 mark.mcgeehan@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
Sunday 15th December	Holy Masses 9am & 11am
Monday 16th December	Holy Mass 12 noon
Tuesday 17th December O Wisdom	Holy Mass 12 noon
Wednesday 18th December O Lord	Holy Mass 12 noon
Thursday 19th December O Root of Jesse	Holy Mass 12 noon
Friday 20th December O Key of David	Requiem Robert Fenton 12 noon
Saturday 21st December O Rising Sun	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Confessions 11.40am-12.50pm, 4-4.40pm Holy Mass 11am Vigil 5pm

Parish Christmas Masses

On Christmas Eve, the First Mass of Christmas, principally for families with children, will be at 5pm. There will be Midnight Mass, preceded by carols from around 11.30pm. On Christmas Day there will be Mass at the usual times of 9am and 11am.

Buildings Update

Over the last few months and with the help of an architect, we have been working on a submission to the Diocesan Properties Department. This is a request for works to begin—mending the roof and creating safe disability access. The tender process is now complete and the parish committees have reviewed the documentation so that an application can be submitted. With diocesan approval, we hope to commence these works in March. Once, we have approval the plans will be shared on the noticeboard.

Dona Digital Collection Plate

We have invested in a digital collection plate which will allow people to make their offering with a bank card. The terminal can record Gift Aid and be programmed for different things such as 200 Club or specific collections. Once we have understood its facilities and are sure it's functioning we'll install the terminal at the foot of the choir-loft steps.

Manchester Gospel Choir

Thank you to the Choir who performed in church last Saturday night. It was a wonderful event: a real tonic for Advent. Particular thanks to Tony who helped the Social Committee to organise this. We made £1335.00. Thanks.

Church Redecoration Fund

I'm happy to report that this fund is doing very well. If we total together the proceeds of the Quiz and Bingo Night, The Folk Night and the Gospel Choir Night, with the 200 Club, Christmas Fair, Christmas Raffle and private donations it comes to £18,850.00. We have past the half-way mark and hopefully, events in the new year will keep up the momentum.

Social Committee

On Thursday 19th December at 7.30pm there will be a meeting of the Social Committee in the Presbytery. This will give us an opportunity to review the Gospel Night and to map out events in 2025.

A Fan or a Fork

You may not have noticed, but from the First Sunday of Advent this year, the Church in our country, adopted a new translation of the Scriptures. In order to impact us more readily, the words that communicate the truth of God's message to us, have been changed. And so I'd like to mention one, small, but significant change today. This, to expose better the truth of the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday. According to the translation we have now, Jesus carries a winnowing fork in his hand and not a winnowing fan. Of course, the essential difference that the new translation emphasises, is the prong on the farming implement that the Lord carries - the spike he uses to pierce and turn over the harvested wheat. It may not seem so, but believe me, this fork is a good thing! In it lies the secret of our joy.

The image that St Luke conjures is of the Lord gathering the fruits of the harvest into his barn. To do this, he must winnow the wheat. He thrusts in his fork, pierces the pile of wheat, and tosses it into the air - the wind drives away the useless chaff and the heavier grain falls to the barn floor to be collected. Our present translation emphasises this forking - the sharp puncture that releases the grain and not the fanning that drives off the chaff.

I think there is a reason for this: The Word of God would have us move forward from remorse to compunction: from a negative and regretful concern for sin - to a piercing of our pride that allows us to go on with positivity and purpose. This is what has happened in the Gospel isn't it? - The prophetic words of John the Baptist have cut his audience to the quick - not to make them miserable about themselves and their past but to make them ask, with a firm purpose of amendment, "What, then, should we do?" This is why Jesus carries a fork and not a fan: this is compunction. The Word must pierce our conscience, toss our sins to the four winds, and allow us to turn again, turn ourselves around, turn over a new leaf and gather fruit

And the rich imagery of this joyful season allows us to take one step further in our thinking, too. What happens when we're pierced? Well, we let out a groan - there's a primordial "ouch!" - a deep, cleansing cry. And this also happens in the Church during these days, doesn't it? On Tuesday, the 'O' antiphons begin, when the Church groans for seven days: O Wisdom, O Lord, O Root, O Key, O Orient, O King, O Emmanuel: 'O,O,O' The word pierces our hearts and lives, and with Mary and the Baptist and all the nations, we let out a sigh for a Saviour: not the groans of guilt or remorse but the joyful sigh of expectation for change, a new beginning.

So, yes, a fork and not a fan is in his hand - a sharp fork with which he prods and cajoles us to move forward: not to fret and worry over the past but to gather up the fruit of the harvest and engage with the future and life.