

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, Stephen King Dan McCormack and Patrick Horner.

PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE DEAD

Recently Deceased: Blanche Pollard, Paul Woodhall, Paul Sands, Val Cox, Paul Sands, Ian Norman and Paula Swift-Reid.

Anniversaries: David Hindle, Jerome Vancalsteren, Kazimierz Rybicki, Sheila Carr, Harry and Irene Caswell, Makin and Towey Families.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



It is a silent and holy night for us, only if we admit the silence of this night into our inner selves—only if our heart, too, listens in solitude.

The silent and solitary soul sings here to the God of the heart its quietest and most ardent song. And it can have confidence that God hears it. For this song no longer seeks a God beyond the stars, in that inaccessible light in which God dwells and that makes Him invisible to all. Because of Christmas, because the Word was made flesh, God is near. And the quietest word, in the stillest room of the heart, the word of love, comes to His ear and to His heart. And those who have entered into themselves, even when it is night, hear in this dark quiet, in the depth of the heart, God’s gentle word of love to them.

	Last Week’s collection was: £1132.20 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, the lamp in the stable burns before the Holy Family for all our families.
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OUR LADY OF GRACE PARISH, PRESTWICH

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday 22nd December	Holy Masses 9am & 11am
Monday 23rd December	Holy Mass 12 noon
Tuesday 24th December Christmas Eve	Holy Mass 12 pm Vigil Mass 5pm Midnight Mass 12 am
Wednesday 25th December Christmas Day	Holy Mass 9am Holy Mass 11am
Thursday 26th December St Stephen’s Day	Holy Mass 12 noon
Friday 27th December St John, Apostle, Evangelist	Holy Mass 12 noon
Saturday 28th December The Holy Innocents	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Confessions 11.40am-12.50pm, 4-4.40pm Holy Mass 11am Vigil 5pm

YCW/Caritas Appeal

There will be an appeal on behalf of the homeless after each Mass today. A number of our young people, who are part of the YCW, give up their time and energy to prepare a meal on Christmas Day for the homeless and for lonely, housebound individuals. They will speak about this work after each Mass and there will be a retiring collection to support their work.

Buildings Update

Some good news for Christmas! The Diocesan Properties Department has accepted our proposal to commence work on the roof and side entrance of the Church. We have accepted the tender of Walker Conservation Ltd—a contractor based in Gorton, Manchester—and are looking at a March start. More details of the scope of the work will be provided in the new year.

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.

January Quiz and Bingo Night

Come January, you may be partied out and looking for something to help pass the time in this dark month. On Friday 17th January 2025 there will be a Parish Quiz and Bingo Night in the Hall. Tickets will be available after Christmas priced £2.

Hall Improvements

You may have noticed, that work has begun to restore the floor in the Parish Hall. Over the quieter period at the start of the New Year we hope to crack on with the repair, sanding and polishing of the floor and the redecoration of the Hall space. We'd ask for your understanding and co-operation as we try to complete these improvements.

At the same time we really need to look at ways to encourage right use and respect for our facilities both from parishioners and those who rent. Perhaps this is something that the Property and Social Committees could look at.

Seasons Greetings

A very Happy Christmas to you and your families and every blessing for a peaceful and healthy New Year from Mark and myself.

Blessed Are You Amongst Women

"I will multiply your pains in childbearing, you shall give birth to your children in pain." This is what the Lord God said to the woman, when through her and her husband, sin entered the world. And, just after this, Adam names his wife Eve, "because she was the mother of all who live." Amongst women, she carries the dreadful curse of human nature to us all.

Today, we are filled with joy as Mary carries to us the Blessed One, Jesus, "who will save his people from their sins." Today, in the joyful mystery of the Visitation, we witness the beginning of the spread of God's blessing on our nature, the grace that will turn history around and reverse the sorry pattern of our sin. 'Eva' becomes 'Ave' today. When Elizabeth is overwhelmed by a visit from "the Mother," the ancient curse that's upon us starts to unravel.

At St Beuno's Retreat Centre in Wales, there's a wonderful painting of the Visitation by Claudia Williams. Mary is depicted opening the kitchen door, wearing a loose-flowing dress and headscarf. Her eyes, full of sympathy and compassion, have met those of Elizabeth—an older woman who stands with her back to the viewer. Elizabeth is wearing a tightly-knitted Arran cardigan. Her hair is tied back in a bun: everything about her speaks of someone buttoned-up with fear and tension.

And Mary opens the door—free and agile and full of grace. She opens the door to be amongst women—to bring the blessing she has received to those in confinement. It's in this moment of greeting that the spirit of Elizabeth is unlocked—and her tightly-knitted existence set free. It's in this moment, the Gospel tells us, that a dance begins: the child in the womb of each woman begins to leap with life and exultation and pain is forgotten.

"Blessed are you among women" - needn't just mean that among all women Mary is the most blessed—but that her blessing is to be among all the daughters of Eve, all women who live, and to offer release and freedom to them from the fullness of her grace. Mary invites all mothers to the dance so that their children may be born into a new world: the Kingdom of God.

Christmas can be a difficult time. One marked by tension, stress and fear. We can feel tied in to so many things that are maybe not concerned with the true meaning of the season. On the eve of the feast, Mary, the Mother of all who live the new life of Jesus, comes to visit us. She is often invoked as Untier of Knots—a title suitable for today. May she visit us under that name today so that all the knots of our heart and conscience can be undone.