

Parishes of St John XXIII & St Joseph, Birtley



Incorporating: **Our Blessed Lady Immaculate**, Washington;
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Penshaw; **St Bede**, Usworth;
St John Boste, Oxclose; **St Joseph**, Birtley
 Fr Martin Morris, Parish Priest, Tel: 0191 4163583
 Administrator: Audrey Huntley tel: 0191 4163583
 (Tuesday & Wednesday 8am—1pm, Thursday 11am—4pm & Friday 12— 5pm)
 Email: StJohn23rd@diocesehn.org.uk
 Parish Website: <https://www.washingtoncatholic.org.uk>



In the Partnership of Benedict

Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Penshaw, Sacriston, Washington

GAUDETE SUNDAY, THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - 13TH - 14TH DECEMBER 2025 Year A

Saturday 13th December	St Joseph	5pm	The Hogan Families
Vigil	St Bede	5pm	Anne McDonagh RIP Sixth Anniversary
Sunday 14th December	St John Boste	9:30am	People of the Parish
Gaudete Sunday, Third Sunday of Advent	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	In Loving Memory Andrew Bell RIP
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Joseph and Ellen Jordan and their Daughter Mary

First reading: The Eyes of the Blind shall be opened. Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Sion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Response to the Psalm: Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Second Reading: Waiting for the Lord. James 5:7-10

Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has sent me to proclaim good news to the poor. Alleluia.

The Gospel: Miracles of the Messiah. Matthew 11:2-11

At that time: When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?' And Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.' As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 'What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." 'Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

Fr Martin Morris	0191 416 3583	Deacon Frank O'Neill	0779 115 5845
Fr Martin Wheaton	0770 996 1040	Deacon Tony Joy	0779 989 3419
Fr Luke Wilkinson	0191 649 8257		

Mass Times & Intentions - Week Beginning Monday 15th December 2025 (* Streamed Mass)

Day	Church	Time	
Monday 15th December	St Bede	10am	Special Intention
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	7pm*	Tony Ingoe RIP
Tuesday 16th December	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Clare Madden RIP
	St Joseph	7pm	Zillah Richardson RIP
Wednesday 17th December	St Bede	10am	Margaret Hodgson and Deceased Hodgson and Stephenson Families
	St John Boste	7pm	Gladys and Tom Bell RIP
Thursday 18th December	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	Private Intention (MP) and Diamond Wedding Michael and Annabelle McCluskey
	St Joseph	12 Noon	Stasia Sigerson (Nee Clark) RIP
Friday 19th December	St John Boste	10am*	Clem Shannon RIP
	St Joseph at St Benet's	9.15am	All Our School Children
Saturday 20th December	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Martin Kerrigan RIP
	St Joseph	5pm	Patrica Stobbart (nee Ford) RIP
	St Bede	5pm	People of the Parish
Sunday 21st December	St John Boste	9:30am	George and Elizabeth Donkin RIP
Fourth Sunday of Advent	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am	Jim McDevitte and Terry and Brendan Ford RIP
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am*	Dave Ranaghan RIP

From a sermon by Saint Augustine

John is the voice, and Christ is the Word

John is the voice, but the Lord is the Word who was in the beginning. John is the voice that lasts for a time; from the beginning Christ is the Word who lives for ever.

Take away the word, the meaning, and what is the voice? Where there is no understanding, there is only a meaningless sound. The voice without the word strikes the ear but does not build up the heart.

However, let us observe what happens when we first seek to build up our hearts. When I think about what I am going to say, the word or message is already in my heart. When I want to speak to you, I look for a way to share with your heart what is already in mine.

In my search for a way to let this message reach you, so that the word already in my heart may find place also in yours, I use my voice to speak to you. The sound of my voice brings the meaning of the word to you and then passes away. The word which the sound has brought to you is now in your heart, and yet it is still also in mine.

When the word has been conveyed to you, does not the sound seem to say: The word ought to grow, and I should diminish? The sound of the voice has made itself heard in the service of the word, and has gone away, as though it were saying: My joy is complete. Let us hold on to the word; we must not lose the word conceived inwardly in our hearts.

St John the Baptist, Pray for Us

Fr Luke Wilkinson

Masses are generally live-streamed daily at 10am every day, except Monday, streamed at 7pm, and alternate Sundays when Mass is live-streamed at either 10am or 11am. An * on the Mass table indicates streamed Masses.
Please [click here](#) to view from one of our Churches

What's On in the Parish

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

Our Lady Queen of Peace each Friday 2pm - 3pm.

St Joseph's each Thursday evening 6.30pm - 7.30pm

I do encourage as many of you as possible to spend some time in quiet prayer with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration. Fr Martin Morris.

Sacrament of Reconciliation - The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available in all of our Churches:

Our Lady Queen of Peace - Thursday morning after Mass.

St Joseph – Thursday after Mass.

St John Boste - Friday morning after Mass.

Our Blessed Lady Immaculate - Saturday morning, after Mass.

St Bede's – Saturday after Vigil Mass.

OLOF (Our Lady's Over 50's club) - No meeting on Tuesday 16 December.

St John Boste - Red Mission Boxes - Please return monies collected by 14 December.

Our Blessed Lady Immaculate - Missio Red Box Donations - Your Red Boxes can be taken to Mass at Our Lady's on Sundays to be emptied until 14 December. Alternatively you can collect a Missio brown envelope from the rear of the church to take home to hold your Red Box contents. You can return the envelope with your donation to church on Sundays until 14 December. A Free Missio 2026 Calendar is available now for all donors. Many thanks for your continued generosity.

Safeguarding - Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is a priority in every parish and diocesan organisation. The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle is fully committed in the church and operates a zero-tolerance approach. The safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is at the heart of the Church's mission. We adopt and implement fully the policies and procedures of the Catholic Church of England and Wales, which is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church. To discuss any safeguarding concerns please contact a safeguarding officer in any of our churches – their details are on the noticeboard in the porch, or follow the contact details on our Parish Website under '[Safeguarding](#)'. Details of our Diocesan policy can be found by [clicking here](#).

A Weekly Reflection and Daily Readings for Advent 2025.

Advent is a time of preparation and to reflect, and hold onto, the messages of hope, peace, joy and love which God promised to us in the birth of Christ Jesus. Members of our Diocesan Writing Team offer this Advent resource to help guide a daily space for reading of the Scripture, reflection and prayer. In it you will find a reflection based on the theme of each week of Advent and an easy-to-follow reference to the readings for each day. The reflections will be available to view and download on the homepage of the Diocesan website from Friday 28 November www.diocesehn.org.uk. In amongst the busyness of the days and weeks ahead, set aside a little time of quiet and calm daily, or as often as you can, to prepare for the coming of the Lord by reading, praying with and reflecting on the daily readings of Advent.

Advent Spiritual devotions. Sunday 21 December 4pm, Our Blessed Lady Immaculate - Advent Eucharistic Adoration and Rosary.

St Bede's, remember a loved one at Christmas. Tags for our Christmas tree will be available in the church porch from this week. All donations welcome.

Mini Vinnies Food Bank. The Mini Vinnies of Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School will be collecting food items at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church on Sunday 14 December at the 10am Mass. All donations are for their local Food Bank.

Advent Alms. We fundraise for [St Cuthbert's Care](#), our social care charity. This year's collection will help fund a new service supporting women experiencing homelessness, leaving prison or at risk of re-offending. Many of these women have faced trauma, abuse or addiction and some have had few safe spaces in their lives. [Donate here](#).

Defibrillator Training Course. Ten Our Lady Queen Of Peace parishioners completed a Defibrillator Training Course on 27 November. This Training was funded by OLQP SVP, so a massive thank you goes to them for their generosity. Because of the success of this training, if others at OLQP would like to complete this Defibrillator Training give your name to any OLQP SVP member, photos of whom are in the foyer at the church. If there is enough interest shown another training course will be organised.

SVP Sing And Chat at the Black Bush. Everyone is welcome to join us at The Black Bush, Washington Village from 12.15pm until 3pm on Friday 19 December. We will be singing Christmas carols and songs so wear your Christmas jumpers!

A Biblical Walk Through the Mass. Fr Luke will be leading a short video study course on the Mass beginning on 9 January 2026 at 7pm at OLQP and running for five weeks, each session will last about an hour. If you have any questions please email Fr Luke at luke.wilkinson@diocesehn.org.uk

Blue Christmas. Christmas can be a difficult time for many people for various reasons. A [Blue Christmas Liturgy](#) looks to acknowledge this while offering hope and support for the season ahead.

New Song. Thank you everyone for a wonderful 2025 full of praise, worship, fellowship and prayer. We are taking a break for Christmas so we look forward to seeing you in the New Year! Next session: 11 Jan 2026 4pm in the Emmaus Room at Our Blessed Lady Immaculate Church with Fr Shaun O'Neill. We can't wait! Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

St Robert of Newminster Christmas Coffee Morning.

Unfortunately, we are unable to host the coffee morning on Monday 15 December. We are sorry for any disappointment and inconvenience caused but you are warmly invited to our Carol Service (see below). There will be an invitation to you all later in the year - watch this space.

St Robert of Newminster Carol Service. Tuesday 16 December, St Bede's Church at 6.30pm. A collaboration between school and parish - all welcome!

Festive Coffee morning at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church after Mass Sunday 14 December. All most welcome. Any donations of mince pies, Christmas bakes will also be welcome. Just drop them off in the kitchen before Mass. Please feel free to wear a Christmas jumper or something festive!

Other News

Appeal for Lourdes Medical team, 2026. The diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes marks its centenary in 2026. The pilgrimage relies on the generosity of nurses, student nurses, healthcare assistants, and other volunteers. If anyone would like further information on helping with the pilgrimage, please contact the lead nurse Michelle Hall via [e-mail](#).

Pilgrimage to Medjugorje, 7 - 14 June 2026. Flying from Newcastle to Dubrovnik. Further info at '[Medjugorje North East](#)'. Led by Fr Martin Morris.

Thank You from Significance. The Trustees of Significance thank everyone in our parishes and schools who supported the Grand Draw and all those who donated prizes. 1005 tickets were sold which realised £5025. The funds raised will help Significance continue to support YMT and the Emmaus Village and to provide opportunities to help young people to recognise their own worth and unique gifts. Congratulations to all our winners: Sr Immaculata (Oaklea Convent), Betty Carey-Reynolds (Ashington), Fiona Standfield (Diocesan Offices), Andrea Kawanzaruwa (Stanley), Ben Cantwell (Penshaw) and Rebecca Leighton (Wallsend).

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor". Do you listen to the voice of truth, the voice of Jesus Christ? Maybe he is inviting you to discern a vocation to the Priesthood. For more information, speak to your Parish Priest or contact the Vocations Promoter: 01207 299 012 or click [here](#)

Churches Together Presents Carols in the Park, Saturday 20 December at 2pm at the Amphitheatre, Herrington Country Park. Everyone welcome, dogs especially.

The Joy of the Gospel. "Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey." Evangelii Gaudium, the Joy of the Gospel, looks at the new evangelisation for the transmission of the faith and has chapters on the following subjects: The Church's Missionary Transformation; The Crisis of Communal Commitment; The Proclamation of the Gospel; The Social Dimension of Evangelization; Spirit-Filled Evangelizers. The full text of Evangelii Gaudium can be downloaded [here](#).

Evangelisation for the Terrified - 'Evangelising for the Terrified', written and produced within the Diocese, is a practical, light-hearted resource for anyone wondering how to get started in sharing their faith. Deliberately written to be a simple, non-threatening collection of ideas that give intention and purpose to normal everyday opportunities that arise. Download a copy [here](#).

The Eucharist: A Gift to be Nurtured. As part of our aim to promote growth and knowledge of the Eucharist, the Association of the Eucharist offer The Eucharist: [A Gift to be Nurtured](#), which gives us words from Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis to guide time before the Blessed Sacrament. This resource can be used by both individuals and groups.

MASS TIMES AND VENUES OVER CHRISTMAS

Please note the changes from the usual Mass times

WEDNESDAY 24 DECEMBER – CHRISTMAS EVE

Christmas Vigil:

5pm St Bede, Washington

6pm Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, Washington*

7pm St Joseph, Birtley (Carols from 6.30pm)

7.30pm Our Lady Queen of Peace, Penshaw (Carols from 7pm)

8pm St John Boste, Washington (Carols from 7.30pm)

Mass through Midnight:

11.30pm Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, Washington*

THURSDAY 25 DECEMBER – CHRISTMAS DAY

10am Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, Washington

10am Our Lady Queen of Peace*, Penshaw

10am St Joseph Birtley

FRIDAY 26 DECEMBER – BOXING DAY

10am St John Boste*, Washington

10am St Joseph's, Birtley

* Indicates a streamed Mass.

Reflections

Diocesan Weekly reflections can be found by [clicking here](#).

Examen - Please follow the links to go to [Pray as You Go](#)

Catholic Social Teaching

For the Newsletter, [click here](#).

Prayers - If you would like to request prayers from the parish community for someone who is sick, or recently deceased, please click on the links below and complete the necessary forms. This will enable their names to be included in private prayer and during various Masses.

[For Prayers for the Sick](#)
[For Prayers for the Deceased](#)

or ring 0191 4163583

To view the sick and recently deceased list [please click here](#). To amend the information on the list [click here](#).

Finance - Standing Order forms and Gift Aid forms are available by clicking on the following links:

[For St John XXIII](#) [For St Joseph's](#)
or ring 0191 4163583.

Parish Newsletter If you have any comments you wish to make about the Parish Newsletter, [please click here](#).

For the latest information, please go to any of the following Websites:

[Parish of St John XXIII](#)
[Parish of St Joseph's](#)
[Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle](#)

All the Links you will ever need!

Please [click here](#) or Scan the QR Code with your mobile phone to go to a site containing All the Links You'll Ever Need.



[To post a notice on this Newsletter, please click stjohn23bulletin@gmail.com](#)