

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
 Email: StJohn23rd@diocesehn.org.uk
 Parish Website: <https://www.washingtoncatholic.org.uk>



In the Partnership of Benedict

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

THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, 14TH – 15TH FEBRUARY 2026 Year A

Saturday 14th February	St Joseph	5pm	George Smith RIP
Vigil	St Bede	5pm	In Thanksgiving for the dedicated service of our Priests; Fr Martin M, Fr Luke W and Fr Martin W
Sunday 15 February	St John Boste	9:30am	Jenna Freeman
The 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am	People of the Parish
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am*	Edward Stephenson

First reading: Contrasts

Sirach 15:15-20

If you desire, you will keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of choice. He has placed before you fire and water: stretch out your hand for whichever you wish. Life and death are in front of people, and whichever one chooses will be given to him. For great is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power and sees everything; his eyes are on those who fear him, and he knows a person's every deed. He has not commanded anyone to be ungodly, and he has not given anyone permission to sin.

Response to the Psalm: *Blessed are those who walk in the law of the Lord!*

Second Reading: The Hidden Wisdom of God

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Brothers and Sisters: Among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him' — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

Gospel Acclamation: : Alleluia, alleluia. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, you have revealed the secrets of the kingdom to little children. Alleluia.

The Gospel: Jesus teaches the true meaning of the Law

Matthew 5:17-37

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 'You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgement." But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, "You fool!" will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. 'It was also said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce." But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. 'Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn." But I say to you: Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from evil.'

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 16th February 2026 (* Streamed Mass)

Day	Church	Time	
Monday 16th February	St Bede	10am	David Harland RIP (1st Anniversary)
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	7pm*	Priest's Intention
Tuesday 17th February The Seven Founders of the Servite Order	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Sophia Willey RIP
	St Joseph	7pm	John Lee RIP
Wednesday 18th February Ash Wednesday	St Bede	10am	Pat Powell RIP (Anniversary)
	St Joseph	12 noon	People of the Parish
	St John Boste	7pm	Priest's Intention.
Thursday 19th February	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	Susan & Elizabeth Foster RIP
	St Joseph	12 Noon	Enid Crossan RIP
Friday 20th February	St John Boste	10am*	Peter & Peter David Jessop
	St Joseph	10am	Sick of the Parish
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am	Christine Mitchell RIP Memorial mass
Saturday 21st February St Peter Damian	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Living & Deceased Barry & Jeffery Families
Vigil	St Joseph	5pm	Michael Ryder RIP
	St Bede	5pm	Phyllis & Tommy Peart
Sunday 22nd February The 1 st Sunday of Lent	St John Boste	9:30am	People of the Parish
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	Margaret Logan RIP
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Christopher Groark RIP 2nd Anniversary

This is our third week with Matthew Chapter Five; a long road from the Beatitudes. Imagine being part of this crowd; are you already being pulled towards the message of Jesus and will find yourself transformed? Does one part of the message particularly resonate and initiate a slower path to understanding or are you an indignant listener to these challenges of established tradition?

One presumes a certain poetic license on Saint Matthew's part, bringing elements of various sermons of Jesus together or otherwise an incredibly long attention span from the crowd, which would ebb and flow through the hours of talking from the distant figure on the raised ground, gradually darkening and standing in sharp relief against a setting sun. Yet still they stayed.

Today's Gospel is strong meat to digest but there is a very clear logic which threads through all the examples cited. Jesus is not overturning the Law of the Old Testament but rather asking much more of each individual, as equals, in how they internalize its message. Jewish scholar, woman, labourer, fisherman: all must confront the challenge. If the Law has become performative, externalized, exclusive – and who better at this than the righteous Pharisees? – then it is missing the point.

Jesus wants us to grapple with the nuance behind the Law, which is about love of God and love for fellow mankind as a reflection of divine love. We must constantly strive for this true love and generous hearts. The eloquence of elaborate oath taking is worthless against a simple yes from a place of faith. This will not always be easy but it is what is demanded of us.

In Chapter Five Saint Matthew deftly records the seeds being sown for the deadlock between the Messiah and those who refuse to listen and cling to the old authority. There will be more sermons and there will be a slew of miracles but some walls will not come down. There will be a reckoning. It is a reminder to us that we cannot be complacent. Self - examination is required and it is uncomfortable – but we are about to enter the season of Lent after all.

Angela Nichols

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/Confessions - 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) - Please note, the club is on a Tuesday at 1pm in the Lindisfarne Room, at St Bede's! All most welcome!

Baptisms - Please note that there is a new system for all Baptisms in the Parish. If you want to request a Baptism, please collect a form from the church where you want the Baptism to take place, complete the form and hand it in to any member of the clergy. For more information please call 07552 733540. You can also download the form by [clicking here](#).

Lent:

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, 18th February.

Ashes will be distributed at all Masses that day.

During the Lenten season there will be many different opportunities for our spiritual renewal, including **Stations of The Cross** in each church:

Friday 6pm - St. Bede's, Wednesday - St. John Boste 6.30pm (not on Ash Wednesday), **Wednesday 12 Noon - Our Lady Queen of Peace, with soup lunch**, and each Sunday afternoon at 4pm at our Blessed Lady Immaculate. **St. Joseph's 7pm after mass on Tuesdays**. Family Fast day is Friday 27th February, offering envelopes are at the back of each church.

Eucharistic Adoration and Rosary at Our Blessed Lady Immaculate Church 4pm This Sunday afternoon, 15th Feb. Rosary & Benediction beginning at 5pm. All welcome.

Ash Wednesday. This Wednesday, Ashes will be blessed at all Masses and distributed. It is a day of fasting and abstinence. Let us keep the season of Lent Holy by truly doing something special.

Lenten Reflection Resources

Lenten resources are available on the homepage of the diocesan website. This includes We Dare to Ask which is a resource for small group faith-sharing and for individual meditation, featuring five sessions on the theme of our Baptismal Vocation. Each session includes scripture, prayers and a reflection with questions. Please consider joining with others this Lent to use We Dare to Ask, as we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at Easter. The booklet, which includes a foreword by Bishop Stephen, is available to view and download now.

Lent, "My day by day" daily prayers. These excellent little prayer books are an ideal accompaniment to the Lenten season. Available from the back of Church, price £1.50 each.

Anne Hughes Crematorium Service:

On Monday 16th February at 2.30pm there will be a service for Anne Hughes at Sunderland Crematorium. All are welcome.

Let us keep in our prayers those members of our parish who are preparing for reception into full communion with the Church at Easter. They will attend the 'rite of election' at St. Mary's Cathedral on the first Sunday of Lent, when Bishop Stephen will enrol them as Candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Please Put Yourself Forward;

If anyone would like to participate in taking the offerings to the altar during mass at OBLI please let Lisa, Winifred or one of the Sacristans know. Please do come forward.

Craft and Chat

St John Boste- Mon 7-9pm weekly.

Our Lady's- Tues 9.30-11.30am weekly.

New members always welcome

Any queries ring **Kath Bengston** 07743667823/ **Chris O'Neill** 07815162153

Brian Willey and family wish to thank all friends, family and parishioners for their kind wishes and condolences following Sophia's death. The retiring collection in memory of Sophia raised over £500 for Macmillan. Thank you for your generosity. God Bless. Anne.

St. Joseph's School Washington.

The staff and children of St Joseph's School invite St John 23rd parishioners to join them for BINGO AND BISCUITS on Monday 16th February at 10.30 am.

Group 735 HCPT The Pilgrimage Trust are holding a fundraising CEILIDH on Friday 13th March 7 pm to 11 pm at North Biddick Club, Fatfield. Music by THE WHOLE SHEBANG. Our Group Target is £1,390 to sponsor a Special Needs Child for a life changing Pilgrimage/ Holiday in Lourdes at Easter. **Price**, which includes a finger buffet is £8. **Under 16s free** if accompanied by a ticket bearing parent or guardian. Tickets available after each Mass at Our Blessed Lady Immaculate. **DONATIONS OF RAFFLE PRIZES** will be much appreciated. Do please join us for this joyful event. **Len Purdy**

Our Alpha Course is up and running on Wednesday evening 6.30-8 at Our Lady Queen of Peace Penshaw, it's open to any and everyone to come along to any or all of our friendly and informal evenings. **Forthcoming topics include:**

Why and how should I read the Bible? How does God guide us? How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? Why and how should I tell others? Does God heal today?

Other News

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes - 31st July – 7th August 2026.

Celebrating 100 years since the First Diocesan Pilgrimage.

Bookings are now open for the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

We travel on Friday 31st July and return on Friday 7th August. 2026 is the 100th anniversary since the first Diocesan Pilgrimage took place led by Bishop Joseph Thorman. If you would like to book, or for further information, please contact Tangney Tours, our Tour Operator by going to their website <https://www.tangney-tours.com/tours-and-pilgrimages/diocese-hexham-newcastle/> or by calling 01732 886 666.

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](#). Email meet@ushaw.org

Cafod Big Lent Walk

Please collect a leaflet after mass and see whether you can support Cafod's work by either walking or praying this Lent.

Do you have some spare time on your hands and want a fulfilling volunteer role?

Our residential centre on Holy Island needs volunteers in 2026.

There are lots of roles: Working with the children on our **Vinnies Summer Camps**, during the Summer holidays as a caretaker, kitchen assistants, cooks, and volunteering to work directly with the children. It's hard work, but so much fun and very worthwhile! No cost, just your time and patience for an interesting week on this beautiful island!

Or perhaps you are retired or have flexible holidays and could give some time to help at our Term Time Camps. These Camps allow hundreds of children from the Diocese and further afield have a great residential holiday in our centre. Guaranteed hard work but fantastic memories too! To join our fabulous team or find out more information about any of the roles and to volunteer, please visit our website: **Holy Island SVP Vinnies Camp** <https://svp.org.uk/microsite/ozanam-camp> or contact BarbaraT@svp.org.uk

Night Falls – a new passion play by Paul Birch - 26 February 2026. Middlesbrough's St Mary's Cathedral to host powerful new passion play. Riding Lights Theatre Company presents 'Night Falls' – a new passion play by Paul Birch. Set over the four days leading up to the crucifixion, 'Night Falls' retells the Easter story through two strangers sheltering in Bethany, in the house of Lazarus – where hope, faith, doubt and grief collide, and where the impossible has already occurred. Blending music with powerful drama, this fresh and vivid production explores themes of courage, belief, loss, fear and hope that resonate widely. The performance is suitable for ages 12-plus, as some mature themes are explored. Cost: Tickets are £15 (concessions £10), with a 10% discount for groups of 10 or more. [Book here](#).

"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](#)

The Catechism in a Year - Sign up for Ascension's [Catechism In A Year](#) podcast with Fr Mike Schmitz, and you can: Read the entire Catechism of the Catholic Church in 365 days; Understand the essentials of the Catholic Faith and why they matter; See how Church teaching is rooted in Sacred Scripture; Absorb over 2,000 years of Sacred Tradition; Encounter God's plan of sheer goodness; Transform their relationship with the Church that Christ founded.

Mass for the Holy Land – Saturday 25th April at 11.00am St Joseph's Church, Birtley
All are warmly invited to attend Mass for the Holy Land on Saturday 25th April at 11.00am at St Joseph's Church, Birtley, celebrated with members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Northumbrian Section.

The Order supports the Christian presence in the Holy Land, assisting local Christian communities through pastoral, educational and charitable work. At a time of great challenge and uncertainty for many in the region, this mission remains especially important. This Mass offers an opportunity for the parish to pray together for peace and to stand in solidarity with Christians in the Holy Land. Members of the Order will be present and will take part in the Mass, including a formal liturgical procession. This will also be an opportunity to find out more about the work of the Order and its mission. Parishioners, families and friends are very welcome, and all are encouraged to come along and join in prayer.

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. Details of our Diocesan policy can be found by [clicking here](#).

Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network - Each month the Holy Father will have a main prayer intention for people to use as part of their daily prayer, and he will also announce an "urgent intention" for people's prayer. A short video based on the main intention published each month and known as 'The Pope Video'. These videos can be viewed through the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#) visit now and watch this month's intention.

Reflections

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

Examen - Please follow the links to go to Pray as You Go [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.

Baptism - To request a Baptism, you can download the form by [clicking here](#) or ring 07552 733540.

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.



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