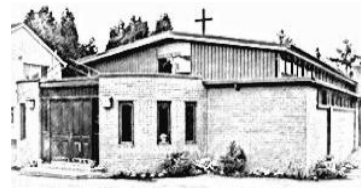




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## Newsletter

## Third Sunday of Advent

December 17<sup>th</sup> 2023

*Dear parishioners at St. Mary's and St. Paul's,*

Let us continue to pray for one another, that we have a very happy and fruitful Advent! In fact, this Third Sunday of Advent is usually called *Gaudete* Sunday, a Latin verb meaning *Rejoice!* The opening antiphon of the Mass invites us, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice. Indeed the Lord is near.*" I was reading some words on this by Pope Benedict and he asked: "What does the Lord is near mean? In what sense must we understand this closeness of God? The Church, illumined by the Holy Spirit, increasingly understood that God's closeness or nearness is not a question of space or time but rather of love: *love brings people together!* This coming Christmas will remind us of this fundamental truth of our faith and in front of the manger we shall be able to savour Christian joy contemplating in the newborn Jesus, the Face of God, who made himself close to us out of love."

Thankfully, for many people throughout the world, Christmas still holds a special place in their hearts and homes. It is good to reflect on why this is still the case? The closeness of God to us in the child Jesus, who is born out of love for us, invites us to a new closeness with one another as family and friends and fellow disciples of Jesus. There is a sense in which Christmas invites us to be born again, out of love for one another. The Church often refers to Jesus, Mary and Joseph as the Holy Family, and also encourages us to see that our family life is also holy. Christmas enables us to see again the sacredness of the journey we make through life together, reminding us that we need one another very much. To use Pope Benedict's words, *love brings people together.*

It is clear that *Gaudete* Sunday is much more than a superficial joy. It is the deep joy of knowing that life is eternal, that we will see again those who have gone before us, that goodness always triumphs over evil, that kindness, mercy and tenderness are gifts from God. I hope that each one of us will find a moment of silence and stillness to hear the Lord say to us personally: "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is very near to you.*"

I look forward very much to celebrating the Christmas liturgy with you and for you, Father O'Brien.

**Diocesan Christmas Carol Concert:** all are warmly invited to Motherwell Cathedral on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm for this year's concert, '*In the Bleak Mid-Winter*'.  
**Admission is free.**

**Advent Faith-Sharing Group:** Mr. Ronnie Boyd has offered to lead an evening group on the Wednesdays of Advent, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, between 7-8pm in the parish meeting room. Please contact Ronnie on [ircboyd@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ircboyd@hotmail.co.uk) if you would like to take part.

**CREDO:** the parish faith-sharing group meets this Tuesday at 1pm in the parish meeting room; there is some tea and cake after the meeting; new members are always welcome.

**I offer here the times of the Liturgy for the coming weeks:**

**Monday December 18th:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

*Rosary at 9.40am*

**Tuesday December 19th:** Mass in St. Paul's School at 9.30am

**Wednesday December 20th:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

*Rosary at 9.40am*

**Thursday December 21st:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

*St. Mary's Primary School will be with us for the liturgy*

**Saturday December 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Vigil Mass at 5pm

**Sunday December 24<sup>th</sup> (Morning):** Mass at 9am and 10.30am

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**Christmas Masses at St. Mary's**

**Christmas Eve, Sunday December 24<sup>th</sup>:** Vigil at 4pm, First Mass of Christmas at 8pm

**Christmas Day, Monday December 25<sup>th</sup>:** Mass at 9am and 10.30am

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**Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup>:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

**Wednesday, December 27<sup>th</sup>:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

*No public liturgy on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> and Friday 29<sup>th</sup>*

**Saturday, December 30<sup>th</sup>:** Vigil Mass at 5pm

**Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup>:** Mass at 9am and 10.30am

**Monday January 1<sup>st</sup> 2024:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10.30am

**Tuesday January 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

**Wednesday January 3<sup>rd</sup>:** Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

**Sacrament of Reconciliation:** many people like to go to Confession as part of their spiritual preparations for Christmas and so the following times are offered:

**Monday and Wednesday after Morning Mass, from around 10.35am**

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December: 11am-12 noon, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed on the main altar; 4.15-4.45pm**

**Recently Deceased:** Danny Rafferty, Richard Lynas, Nadia Crolla, Richard Lynas, Maureen O'Keane, Sister Mary Bernardine, Gloria Rodriguez,

**Special Remembrance:** Nan McCluskey, Catherine Reilly, Mary Dorman, Wullie Savage, William Ward, Ian McNab, Jaime Donnelly, Anna and Elizabeth Donnelly, Mark Hughes, Thomas, Elizabeth and John Kane, John McParland, Les Graham, Margaret Phairs, Margaret Feenie, Gerard Falsey, Mary and John Dowds, Betty and Tommy Falsey, Rita and Gerard Kane, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Catherine Seagrave, and all our deceased relatives and friends and the benefactors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's.