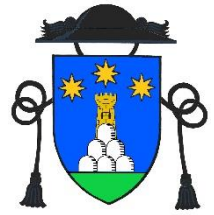




THE PARISH OF SAINT MARY, HALIFAX

Incorporating the churches of St Alban and St Mary

Parish Priest: Rev. Fr Joshua Hilton
 Deacon: Rev. John Walsh
 Presbytery: Clarence House, 2 Clarence Street, Halifax HX1 5DH
 T: 01422 352141 E: office.stmary.halifax@dioceseofleeds.org.uk
 Website: www.stmaryshalifax.com
 St Mary's Primary Academy: 01422 362365



MASS SCHEDULE AND DEVOTIONS

Perpetual Novena:

Wednesday after 9:30am
Mass

Holy Rosary:

Saturday after 12:15pm Mass

Devotions to the Sacred Heart:

First Friday of the month after
9:30am Mass

Our Lady's Lamp this week burns for:

Nell Prideux Ints.



Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:

Saturday 11:00am – 12:00pm
at St Mary's

Confessions:

Saturday -
11:00am-12:00pm – St
Mary's
Sunday -
5:30pm–6:00pm – St Alban's
or on Request

Marriages and Baptisms
by appointment

SUNDAY 24 th DECEMBER	4 th Sunday of Advent	9:30am	St Mary's	Deceased members of the Moska Family
	Christmas Eve	4:00pm 7:00pm	St Mary's St Alban's	Wilfred, Winifred, Francis Coates Fr Hilton's Intentions
MONDAY 25 th	Christmas Day	9:30am 11:00am 1:30pm	St Mary's St Mary's St Mary's	Mgr Owens' Intentions Fred & Betty Budds Polish Mass
TUESDAY 26 th	St Stephen	12 Noon	St Mary's	Alice Williams
WEDNESDAY 27 th	St John Apostle	12 Noon	St Mary's	Directors, Academy Councillors and all at the BPS Trust
THURSDAY 28 th	The Holy Innocents	No Public Mass		
FRIDAY 29 th	REQUIEM	12:15pm	St Mary's	Martin Flaherty
SATURDAY 30 th	Christmas Octave	12:15pm	St Mary's	Fretty Jacob

READERS ROTA

	THIS SUNDAY		NEXT SUNDAY (31 st Dec)
9:30am	John Greenwood	9:30am	Gabrielle Colleran
4:00pm	Jovanna Karuna	11:00am	Tim Widdop
7:00pm	Bernard Corcoran	6:00pm	Paul Coates

PLEASE PRAY FOR all those who have died recently including Martin Flaherty and Lynda O'Brien and all those whose anniversaries occur at this time.

MASSES RECEIVED:

Maureen Colleran, Wasyl & Angelina Boruzenko, David Shorrock Int, Maureen Riddeal, Joe Riddeal, Blessed Peter Snow Trust, Fretty Jacob x 3

PRAYER LIST Gerard James, Christine Blackburn, David Sutcliffe, Gladys Megson, John Wallis, Peter Fekete, William Long, Sonya Box, Julie Simpson, Charlotte Fitzpatrick, Peter Smith, Julie Hall, Moya Andrew, Suzanne Peaker, Larry Byrne, Kathleen Hannan, Nancy McGrath, Eleanor Foran, Patricia Reynolds and all the sick and housebound of the parish, their families and those who care for them. If you know of anyone in the Parish who is ill or is housebound please let Fr Hilton or Deacon John know so that a visitation can be arranged.

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS/COLLECTION

The collection taken at Christmas Masses, as on Easter Sunday, is your personal gift to your priest which makes up a significant part of the clergy's annual taxable income. This excludes standing orders which are retained for parish funds and are not included in the Christmas offering.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

If you require the services of the SVP please call 07512 011 440.

Date of next meeting - Monday 8th January 6 pm St Aban's Parish Room

The SVP would like to wish everyone a holy and happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

And, a big, big thank you for your continued support which has enabled us to help so many people throughout the last year.

If anyone would like to donate the Sort Code and Account Number are - 60-60-04 46086137

WEDNESDAY ROSARY ZOOM CODES

From 15th November the new codes are ID: 724 2604 2240 Password: 9ErJMm

HALIFAX CATHOLIC MEMORIAL CLUB

The Club is open over the Christmas period, Christmas Eve 12-3pm and 7 -11pm

Christmas Day and Boxing Day 12-2pm and 7pm onwards

New Year's Eve - Party Night with the 3 and a Half Men Band, quizzes and games. All welcome.

COME AND SEE MONTHLY PRAYER GROUP

Mission Halifax invite you to a new monthly prayer group. Prayerful reflection, Adoration, praise & worship, and testimony, 7pm, Friday 12 January 2024. St Patrick's Church, Elland HX5 0PU. All welcome.

RECENT FINANCIAL NEWS - Last week's loose collection was: **£694.86**

Thank you to those who have switched to standing orders.

THANK YOU

As another year comes to an end, I would just like to take this opportunity to say a huge 'thank you' to those who give so generously of their time in helping me to run and administer the parish. Keeping this show on the road is no mean feat and I am so grateful to have the assistance, particularly of Deacon John on the altar and Julie in the office, alongside all those who do so much to help me behind the scenes; in the sacristy, serving Mass, reading, visiting the sick, doing the accounts, claiming the gift aid, cleaning the church, washing the linens, producing the bulletin and so much more besides. And to all of you, the parishioners, for your kindness, love and support, it really is my joy and privilege to be your parish priest and I am grateful to each one of you. I pray that the parish will continue to grow from strength to strength and wish you every blessing for the New Year and 2024.

FROM YOUR PARISH PRIEST

After what feels to have been a rather frantic Advent, probably because it has been so short, Christmas is finally upon us. The smell of Christmas trees and cooking turkeys wafts through people's houses. Cards are still coming through the door and last minute presents are still being ordered on Amazon. These few days are crowded with panic-stricken shoppers and the roads are jam packed with the hordes of people who have remembered that "one more thing" they need to get.

Amongst the festivities and the busy-ness it can be hard for us to capture something of that moment, some 2000 years ago, when the Word was made Flesh, something of the intimacy of that moment in the manger, or very simply of the quiet prayerfulness of the day "when ages beyond number had run their course...the whole world being at peace". There is a remarkable contrast here between the crowds heading down into town and the interior of our church. Here, now, as on every day, this house of God, this little Bethlehem, offers an oasis of prayer and of stillness where any one of us can come, kneel, and simply enjoy being in the Presence of Almighty God amidst that peace which the world cannot give.

We do all rush around at this time of year. There is much to be done and that is no bad thing — we want to make Christmas the best it can be for those whom we love and with whom we wish to share the feast of Our Lord's Incarnation. But let us not forget to prepare ourselves, to sweep out the manger of our hearts by a good confession, to unwrap the gifts the Good Lord wishes to bestow upon us in prayer and in sacrament, and to make our own soul a fitting place for Him to be born.

Amidst the uncertainties and problems of the world at the moment it can be very easy to become disheartened or even afraid. The feast of Our Lord's birth, however, is an antidote to anxiety. Over and over again that is exactly what we are told in Scripture: not to be afraid. The phrase is like an echo, repeated over 100 times in the Old Testament, over 40 times in the New. Within the chapters of the Christmas story, Our Lady, St Joseph, Zechariah, and the shepherds all hear this message of overcoming life - "Do not be afraid"... "Do not be afraid"... "Do not be afraid"... "Fear not".

To live without fear doesn't mean that all threat and worry vanishes, or that God will somehow magic our problems away just because we believe in Him. And it's not a matter of will power either, as if we can force ourselves not to feel a certain way. Rather, it's to put the landscape of our lives in a different frame - a frame that is built by God's plan and God's purposes in Jesus Christ. Do not be afraid, even if things go badly; because God is with you. Do not be afraid, because the promises of Jesus are for you. Do not be afraid, because the worst that life can throw at you is as nothing compared with the glory that has been set aside for you forever in eternity. In the frame of God's providence and God's unfailing love, we can face the cold winds of the world for ourselves - just as Our Lady and St Joseph did in their journey to Bethlehem. And there's more: by the Spirit of God we can be strengthened to offer hope and love to those around us, who may indeed be lost in fear and who need the joy and the quiet assurance that God truly enables us to give.

This story is no sentimental fairy tale. Hope is born – but it comes in the midst of scandal, stigma and real fear. This is what gives our Christian hope the power to redeem and reconcile the most difficult of situations and the most broken of lives. God was born into poverty, in a world of fear and violence, yet overcame it all with His love. Whatever is on your mind this Christmas, the message is the same as it was 2023 years ago, **do not be afraid!** I hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas.

God bless you all,
Fr Hilton

Mass Offerings, Notices and News Items for the Parish Bulletin should be given to Fr Hilton or Deacon John by Wednesday evening. Notices and News Items but not Mass Intentions can be sent to John Coates (07842 066450 or jbcoates@btinternet.com) again by Wednesday evening. The Parish Safeguarding Representative is Clare O'Neill (07792147620 psr.coneill@dioceseofleeds.org.uk)
Leeds Diocese Charity Registration No. 249404