

# SUNDAY PLUS

Hope, and spread hope

## What is hope?

By Paul Higginson



It has been said that people are often motivated by either fear or hope. In the Church of the past, fear was often a primary driver of faith: "believe this, do that and you will be saved". However, since Vatican II, this has been replaced by a theology of hope, involving relationship and "metanoia" (a transformative change of heart). This Christmas Pope Francis will inaugurate Jubilee 2025 with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope". What exactly is hope? In a sense it's a vision for better days, and in today's Gospel we hear about the Lord filling in valleys and making crooked roads straight.

On our pilgrimage through life God makes "the rough ways smooth". Sharing our sorrows and joys, he is our constant guide and encourager, picking us up when we fall and loving us unconditionally. John the Baptist proclaims a God who comes to heal us, not to punish us. However, hope is not just a vision for the future - it needs repentance and a change of heart in the present. And if hope is to thrive, it must be spread and shared. In the words of Pope Francis, "hope is meant for everyone... it grows by being given away".

When so much of our world is beset with fear, may our journey through Advent be a journey of hope, echoing St Paul's prayer: "May the God of hope bring you such joy and peace in your faith that the power of the Holy Spirit will remove all bounds to hope."

*Paul Higginson is a retired teacher and author of Doing Christianity: How religion is about what you do, not what you believe.*

Your New Sunday Missal is available from Redemptorist Publications. Visit [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk)  
Code: 1979 ISBN: 9780852316436 Price: £19.95



## Hope into reality

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Many years ago, when visiting the spinal unit in an Australian hospital, I walked past the gym. "Bluey", a young man with a severe spinal cord injury, had been told he would never walk again following his motorbike accident. However, he'd recently been selected to try experimental equipment which, predating today's computerised technology, was heavy, bulky and unsightly. Scientists hoped that, strapped to Bluey's legs, the apparatus might

transform immobility into mobility. He'd had to train hard to build up sufficient physical strength and this was the great day. Dripping with perspiration from the effort and leaning heavily on crutches, Bluey was walking! He managed about twenty paces whilst staff – and I – watched in amazement and joy. It was an incredible moment in which hopes and dreams came true. For sure, the scientists are still working on and refining their project, but Bluey showed that hope can become reality.

*Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.*

## Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope



### The Jubilee logo

Whoever you are, whatever you do and wherever you live, life isn't always easy and straightforward. That's why we need each other. Isolation isn't good for anyone, especially when the going is rough. For Christians, our anchor is the cross, holding out the hope of safety as we travel together on life's stormy waters. Jesus isn't distant. He doesn't leave us alone but comes towards us with his arms wide open to give us the hug that we so often need. We are all pilgrims, pilgrims of hope, travelling in hope towards Jesus, whom we know loves us more than we can possibly imagine.

The Jubilee Prayer

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos, in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally.

**Today:** Baruch 5:1-9, Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11, Luke 3:1-6  
**Monday:** Genesis 3:9-15, 20, Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12, Luke 1:26-38  
**Tuesday:** Isaiah 40:1-11, Matthew 18:12-14  
**Wednesday:** Isaiah 40:25-31, Matthew 11:28-30  
**Thursday:** Isaiah 41:13-20, Matthew 11:11-15  
**Friday:** Isaiah 48:17-19, Matthew 11:16-19  
**Saturday:** Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4, 9-11, Matthew 17:10-13  
**Next Sunday:** Zephaniah 3:14-18, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:10-18

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## The Catholic Parish of St Mary & St John Fisher, Denton



Parish Priest, Father Joseph Gee  
Parish Sister, Sr Dolores

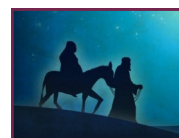
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## 2nd Sunday of Advent 8th December 2024



### The Word This Week



Again we hear about the coming "Day of Christ", and meet the character of John the Baptist. Just as once before he "prepared the way" for the coming of Christ, so today he does the same for us. Our hearts should be open to his voice, as he calls us to repentance, and asks us to make the way straight for the coming of our Lord.

The imagery of this Sunday is particularly rich: the dominant image is of a vast population moving together - the return from exile in the first reading, the going and coming of the sowers in the psalm, the community of the Church preparing together in Paul's letter. We prepare for the coming of the Lord as His people - a community who cooperate to make the "processional way" of the Holy One - flattening the hills of opposition and ridicule, filling in the valleys of doubt and despair, so that "all mankind shall see the salvation of God."

### Saints celebrated this week

#### 9 December: Saint Juan Diego Cuatlatloatzin

The "seer" of Guadalupe, an Aztec who was granted a vision of the Virgin Mary in 1531, later building a church in her honour. He died in 1548 and was canonised in the Basilica of Guadalupe on May 6, 1990, by Pope John Paul II during his second apostolic journey to Mexico.

#### 11 December: Saint Damasus I

Born in Spain, he became Pope in 366 and encouraged devotion to the Roman martyrs, writing splendid verses to adorn their resting places. He died in 384.

#### 12 December: Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Blessed Virgin appeared to Saint Juan Diego on the mountain of Tepeyac in what is now Mexico in 1531, miraculously leaving her image on his cloak which is still venerated today. Through Saint Juan Deigo the Blessed Virgin calls all peoples to the love of Christ.

#### 13 December: Saint Lucy

A Sicilian martyr who died in the persecution of the Emperor Diocletian; she is an example of innocence and faithfulness, and her cult was very popular in the early Church.

#### 14 December: Saint John of the Cross

Born in 1542. A Carmelite friar and friend of Saint Teresa of Avila, who encouraged him to work for the reform of the order, which he did despite great suffering. A remarkable poet and mystic, he died in Andalusia in 1591.

| Mass Times and ‘offered for’ dedications<br>W/C 8th December 2024 |                             |                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday 8th Dec                                                    | Saturday 7th                | 4pm SJF - <i>Johanna Hassall</i><br>9.30am SJF - <i>Parish</i><br>11am StM - <i>Anne Shelvin</i> |
| Monday 9th                                                        | Mass                        | 9.30am StM- <i>Elaine Delaney</i>                                                                |
| Tuesday 10th                                                      | No Mass                     |                                                                                                  |
| Wednesday 11th                                                    | Mass                        | 9.30am StM - <i>Edward Blake</i>                                                                 |
| Thursday 12th                                                     | Mass                        | 9.30am SJF - <i>Anthony Cummins</i>                                                              |
| Friday 13th                                                       | Mass                        | 9.30am StM - <i>Felifack</i><br><i>Magnidieu Charnelle</i>                                       |
| Saturday 14th                                                     | Mass                        | 4pm SJF                                                                                          |
| Sunday 15th                                                       | Mass                        | 9.30am SJF 11am StM                                                                              |
| Saturday & Sunday                                                 | Sacrament of Reconciliation | Available 30 minutes prior to the start of Mass                                                  |

**Sacrament of Reconciliation in Advent - Wed 11th December 7.30pm - 8.30pm**  
Two local priests will join me at **St Mary’s Church** to help prepare us for the celebration of Christ’s birth.

I am also assisting at  
**Holy Family on Thurs 12th December at 7pm.**

**St Joseph’s Reddish on Wednesday 18th at 7.30pm**

You are very welcome to receive the sacrament at these churches if the dates are more convenient.

**Parish Christmas Fair** The final total raised is **£3100!**  
**Thanks again to all involved in any way!**

**Haughton Green Food Bank -Christmas Appeal**  
Our local food bank is appealing for items to give local families a good Christmas and have asked for any **non-perishable items such as mince pies, cakes and chocolate to be sent in as soon as possible.**

They will be accepting **fresh items** (Use by date of at least 25/12/24) **from 18th December.** Once again Parishioners, Brian and Anne Fox, will take donations to the foodbank on our behalf. Items such as chickens, vegetables and fruit can be brought to **St John Fisher Church between 9.30am and 12noon on Wednesday 18th, Thursday 19th and Friday 20th December.** If you can’t get to church they can collect items on those days. Phone or text on 07379794924 to arrange a time.

Thank you to all who give donations of food and cash to the Food Bank throughout the year. God bless you and all those in need.






**Mass Offerings - Christmas Memories for Deceased Members of Lally, Mitchell and Coriam Families**  
**December Mass Offerings**  
When all dates are allocated for December we will send Mass requests to other priests so they will be said in December



*(Please obtain permission from any living beneficiary of a Mass offering before sending it in.)*

| Altar Prayer Candles W/C 8th December 2024                      |                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| The Sanctuary                                                   | Sick & Housebound Parishioners |
| Sacred Heart                                                    | Bereaved & Lonely              |
| Our Lady                                                        | Ner Lumido Anniversary         |
| Please remember the above intentions in your prayers this week. |                                |

**Sanctuary Candles** There are quite a few candle dedications available for Christmas remembrance, Christmas Blessings, special intentions etc. (Forms at back of church) *(You must get permission from any living beneficiary of a full name dedication).*

**Do you struggle to find cash for the Offertory Collection?** Since Covid many people are not using cash, so many Parishioners now make a weekly or monthly donation to the Parish via a standing order. We can still claim the Gift Aid on the amount and it reduces admin for the office and the costs related to handling cash. The money pays for heating, lighting, consumables, maintenance etc which are ever increasing costs! Please ask Fr Joe for a standing order mandate or phone/e mail the Parish office if you’d like a form sent to you. Thank you!



**Christmas Gifts that make a difference**  
We have CARITAS and CAFOD Christmas gift booklets at the back of both churches. These alternative gift ideas could make a real difference to families in poverty locally and overseas.

[Will you 'Bee There' this Christmas? | Caritas Salford](#)  
[CAFOD World Gifts](#)




**Red Mission Boxes** Any Parishioners who have a red mission box please bring them in to be emptied. The Mill Hill Fathers rely on the money raised from these boxes to finance their missionary work overseas and very much appreciate your support and generosity. Thank you.



**How do I arrange a Sacrament of the Sick Visit?**  
When you need to organise a visit for the Sacrament of the Sick, please see Fr Joe or telephone the office. If you cannot contact Father Joe and a visit is urgent please contact a neighbouring Parish Priest at Holy Family, St Josephs Reddish, or Sacred Heart Gorton.

**Can you find all the words in today’s Gospel?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |          |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| E | D | U | J | O | N | H | E | A | E | TIBERIUS |
| I | O | A | S | N | P | R | E | E | S | PILATE   |
| P | R | S | U | H | J | D | N | L | S | JUDEA    |
| L | E | Y | I | O | U | E | Y | A | A | HEROD    |
| I | H | L | R | J | L | S | N | E | E | PHILIP   |
| H | I | A | E | I | A | N | S | T | A | ITURAEA  |
| P | I | L | B | N | A | N | A | L | R | LYSANIAS |
| I | S | A | I | A | H | L | N | I | U | ABILENE  |
| E | T | A | T | R | I | U | N | P | T | ANNAS    |
| M | S | A | H | P | A | I | A | C | I | CAIAPHAS |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | JOHN     |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ISAIAH   |



Thank you to the families now bringing their children to the Sacramental Programme. Please show this little prayer to them.

[A Prayer for Children preparing to receive their First Holy Communion.](#)  
*Jesus, I know that you love me. Prepare my heart so that I can receive you soon!*

*Merciful God, you sent John the Baptist to prepare for the coming of Christ. May your Spirit be with us as we wait for your Son's coming so we may make a straight path in our hearts and in our world.*

**Faith in Action (FIA) Programme**  
Participants looking to complete their FIA award need to demonstrate that they are contributing to the Parish in various ways (Parish Hours). Support for activities at **St Mary’s** is provided at an FIA meeting for **silver and gold participants every 2nd Sunday** of the month and **all FIA participants every 3rd Sunday** of the month at the end of 11:00am Mass.. A meeting for **all participants who attend Mass at St John Fisher** is scheduled to take place **after 4pm Mass on the Saturday** for the first Sunday of the month. Current meetings at St Mary’s are for the organisation, preparation and participation in the FIA children's led Mass which takes place on the 4th (or last) Sunday of every month.



**Salford Diocese Information**

**Diocesan Mass for Young Adults** returns to St Augustine's in Manchester next month with a festive feel! Join us at **5.30pm on Sunday 8 December** as we gather together for Mass before enjoying some seasonal treats and the return of our series of talks exploring the Catholic faith. All are welcome!

**In the Footsteps of Mary: An Advent Prayer Walk** Join the Diocese of Salford's Laudato Si' Centre team this December for a reflective prayer walk around the Centre's beautiful woodland. This self-guided trail invites us to focus on Mary’s journey to Bethlehem and the example she sets us as we continue our own spiritual journey in this season of Advent. A number of sessions will be taking place on Wednesday **18 December**. Find out more at <https://laudatosicentre.org.uk/events/advent-retreat/>

**Opening Mass for the Pilgrims of Hope Jubilee** Pope Francis has invited dioceses across the world to unite in prayer as we begin the 2025 "Pilgrims of Hope" Jubilee. Our diocese will be marking the start of the Jubilee with a Mass, celebrated by Bishop John, on **Sunday 29th December at 2pm** at Salford Cathedral's Temporary Church. All are welcome to join us as we mark the start of this special year of grace.

**Pilgrims of Hope Jubilee in our Diocese** Pope Francis has declared that the year **2025 will be a Holy Year of Jubilee for the Catholic Church**, an event that takes place once every 25 years and offers the faithful an opportunity to renew their relationship with God, each other, and all of creation. Over the coming months, there will be plenty of opportunities for you to observe this special year of grace in our own diocese. To find out more about the Jubilee and how to get involved, please visit <https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/news/jubilee-2025/>

**Jubilee of Youth - Pilgrimage to Rome** Young adults across the diocese are invited to join our diocesan Youth Ministry Team for a special pilgrimage to Rome next year. Pilgrims will be travelling to Rome for the Jubilee of Youth, announced by Pope Francis at the 2023 World Youth Day. Our pilgrimage will take place between **28 July and 4 August**. Email [youth@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:youth@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) to find out more.

**A Call to Lead - A Post-Confirmation Programme** A new post-confirmation programme has been developed by Salford Youth Ministry and the Young Christian Workers Movement to bridge the gap between confirmation and adult formation, with the aim of helping young people to grow in faith and become active leaders of the parish community. For more information about the programme, please visit <https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/a-call-to-lead>

**Job Vacancies**—Find out more and apply at <https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/news/vacancies>