

SUNDAY PLUS

The promise of hope



Expectancy and hope

By Michael George

Advent is a time of expectancy and hope.

This is a busy time in schools. There are nativity plays and carol services, decorations, making of cards, exchanging of gifts, Christmas lunches and visits – visits to the crib and visits from Father Christmas. It is a joyful time.

Expectancy, hope and joy resound through today's readings. "Shout for joy" exhort both the first reading and the psalm, and "Be happy" instructs the second reading: the time of Christmas will soon be upon us. In the Gospel, John brought authority and as a result expectancy built among the people. But he was not the Christ: Christ was still to come.

Last Advent I accompanied pupils who had been invited to sing carols in a local care home. When a teacher asked the residents whether any of

them had any requests that the children could sing, one lady, who had been joining in enthusiastically with the children singing, shouted out, "Any! I just love Christmas!" She was indeed singing and shouting for joy, albeit several days before Christmas itself.

It is a privilege that I can help children share Advent and Christmas joy with others. It is the nature of the school calendar that Christmas joy is anticipated: schools break for the holidays several days before Christmas. Yet that joy can be anticipated with certainty because of God's promise of hope, shared by John the Baptist. God will always be true to his promises. The celebration of the Nativity will soon be here.

Michael George has worked in Catholic schools in the south of England for 25 years, as teacher, headteacher and chaplain.

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Experience joy

By Linda Jones

The Gospel is good news. There is hope. Today we hear how the crowds are full of excitement and expectation. Perhaps something in their lives will change. Someone special is coming.

Just before Christmas we can feel overwhelmed. Sometimes we get really worried about living up to some ideal event, with perfect food and a few days without family arguments. But deep down we know this is unrealistic. We

are human after all. We make mistakes, get grumpy and tired, and forget stuff. That's just normal.

But the worst thing about all the worry is that it can lead us to miss out on the joy. The worst thing about the fear is that we miss out on the hope. Can we share the joy and the hope at this time of year? One of the best ways to fully experience joy is to share it with others. How could you do that?

Linda Jones is Head of the CAFOD Theology Programme and a regular contributor to Redemptorist Publications.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

The Jubilee Prayer

Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope



What is the Jubilee?

The Jubilee has always been an event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church. Ever since 1300, when Boniface VIII instituted the first Holy Year – initially celebrated every hundred years, then, following its biblical precedent, every fifty years, and finally every twenty-five years – God's holy and faithful people have experienced this celebration as a special gift of grace, characterised by the forgiveness of sins and, in particular, by the indulgence, which is a full expression of the mercy of God. The faithful, frequently at the conclusion of a lengthy pilgrimage, draw from the spiritual treasury of the Church by passing through the Holy Door and venerating the relics of the Apostles Peter and Paul preserved in Roman basilicas. Down the centuries, millions upon millions of pilgrims have journeyed to these sacred places, bearing living witness to the faith professed in every age.

Pope Francis

Today: Zephaniah 3:14-18, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:10-18
Monday: Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17, Matthew 21: 23-27
Tuesday: Genesis 49: 2, 8-10, Matthew 1: 1-17
Wednesday: Jeremiah 23: 5-8, Matthew 1: 18-25
Thursday: Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25, Luke 1:5-25
Friday: Isaiah 7: 10-14, Luke 1:26-38
Saturday: Song of Songs 2: 8-14, Luke 1:39-45
Next Sunday: Micah 5:1-4, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45

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



Parish Priest, Father Joseph Gee
Parish Sister, Sr Dolores

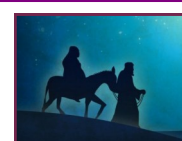
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3rd Sunday of Advent 15th December 2024



The Word This Week



This Sunday is called "Gaudete" Sunday — "Rejoice Sunday". This comes from the readings we hear today, and it underlines an important point. In the Gospel, we hear John the Baptist telling different groups what to do - they must repent, and change their lives. We might think of this as a rather joyless thing - something which is hard and unrewarding. The message of this Sunday is that repentance and changing our lives to welcome Jesus is something richly joyful. When we are planning to welcome anyone we love to our homes, we set about cleaning and preparing for their visit with enthusiasm - nothing is too much trouble for someone we care for greatly. Even scrubbing the bath or polishing the furniture can be a happy and joyful thing! The message of this Sunday is that preparing to welcome the Lord - even though it may involve hard work - is something utterly joyful, because of our love for Him, and His love for us.

Saints celebrated this week

21 December: Saint Peter Canisius

A Dutch Jesuit, active in Germany during the Counter-Reformation, when he wrote a famous catechism. He died in 1597 and is called the "second apostle of Germany."

Holy Father's intention

We pray that this Jubilee Year strengthen our faith, helping us to recognise the Risen Christ in our daily lives, and transform us into pilgrims of Christian hope.



Christmas Mass Times

**Tuesday 24th December -
St Mary's**
Christmas Carols - 4.30pm

First Mass of Christmas - 5pm

Wednesday 25th December - Christmas Day

St John Fisher - 9.30am

St Mary's - 11am

Poinsettias for the Altars

Please consider lending to Church, a poinsettia, to decorate the altars during advent. You can bring them in (preferably in a pot with your name on) then you can collect them after Christmas. Thank you!



Mass Times and ‘offered for’ dedications W/C 15th December 2024		
Sunday 15th Dec	Saturday 14th	4pm SJF - <i>Parish</i> 9.30am SJF - <i>Rose Egan</i> 11am StM - <i>Irene Miller</i>
Monday 16th	Mass	9.30am StM– <i>Paul McDonald</i>
Tuesday 17th	No Mass	
Wednesday 18th	Mass	9.30am StM - <i>Fr Michael Kelly</i>
Thursday 19th	Mass	9.30am SJF - <i>Peter McDonald</i>
Friday 20th	Mass	9.30am StM - <i>Maichailo Buriak & Giuseppe Drago</i>
Saturday 21st	Mass	4pm SJF
Sunday 22nd	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
There’s an extra opportunity to receive the Sacrament at **St Joseph’s Reddish on Wednesday 18th at 7pm**
I will be available with Fr Damien and Fr Peter.

Parish Administrator - Part Time
We are looking to recruit a suitable person to fill the role here in the Parish. The full job description and application is on the link below or see Fr Joe to find out more/get a copy. In brief it is 9 hours per week-Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 9.30am-12.30pm.
[Vacancies - Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford](#)

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.



Red Mission Boxes Please bring in your box to be emptied. Your support is very much appreciated. Thank you.



Mass Offerings - Cyril Barrett (A); Christina Howley (A); George Davies (BM); Irene Griffin (A); Fr Noel Galvin (A); Alan Appleton (A); Carolyn Hughes (RIP); Sr Frederica (LD); John Slevin (LD); Maureen Griffiths (LD)
December Mass Offerings
Any Mass requests coming in for December are now being said at other Parishes as all of our Masses are now allocated.
(Please obtain permission from any living beneficiary of a Mass offering before sending it in.)



Sanctuary Candles *There are no candle dedications this week.*

Recent deaths in our Parish
Please pray for the repose of the soul of **Maureen Griffiths**.
Our condolences go to her family and friends. May she rest in peace.



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/>
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.



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	

The Infancy Narratives – The genealogy of Matthew and the year of Jubilee
As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas, in this third week of Advent the Church sets before us the great ‘O’ antiphons.
17th O Wisdom 18th O Lord 19th O Root of Jesse 20th O King of David
21st O Rising Sun 22nd O King of the Peoples 23rd O Emmanuel
As well as being the verses of a popular Christmas carol, each of the "O Antiphons" carries Old Testament biblical figures that point toward the New Covenant, which serves as a point of meditation when considering the Incarnate Word, the Son of God made flesh.
This Advent in particular, as well as preparing for the Birth of Christ, at the same time we are also preparing for the **Jubilee year of 2025** which runs from **Tue, 24 Dec 2024 – Tue, 6 Jan 2026**.
The gospel for 17th December (the first of the Antiphons) is the start of Matthews Gospel – the Genealogy of Jesus Christ literally the Biblos Genesis of Jesus Christ –(Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) – just as Genesis the first book in the Old Testament is the book of origins of the material creation so now the first book of the New Testament starts with the book of origins of the New Creation. Matthew not only uses his genealogy to look forward to the birth of Christ, but at the same time also develops within the genealogy the idea of the great Jubilee.
The idea of the great Jubilee is rooted in the Old Testament in the book of Leviticus chapter 25. Initially a ‘Sabbath year’ was ordained every 7th year (ie a ‘week’ of years) and each field would lie fallow. However, ‘every seven weeks of years’ there would be a year of Jubilee the following year – the 50th year. Every seven cycles of sabbatical years there would follow a year of Jubilee. **So if a ‘week’ of years is 7 years (the sabbatical year), then 7 ‘weeks’ or cycles of years is 49 years, then the next year the 50th would be a year of Jubilee.** The Jubilee year involved a double aspect of redemption first - the restoration or redemption of land – the return of all property to its original owners or heirs and secondly the restoration or redemption of persons - the liberation of slaves and the cancelling of debts.
Matthew starts his genealogy of Jesus (Son of Abraham, Son of David) from Abraham up to the birth of Christ since he originally is writing for Jewish Christians. Matthew then uses this Jubilee pattern of 7x7 in anticipation of 50 (time of Jubilee). In his lineage *‘The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation to Christ.’*
Matthew groups 3 cycles of 14 generations from Abraham to the birth of Christ. In effect this is also 6 groups of 7 generations. Here we begin to see the ‘Jubilee pattern’ contained within Matthews genealogy. If 3 cycles of 14 generations are 42 generations and are equivalent to 6 cycles of 7 generations – the ‘jubilee pattern’ 6x7=42, then the 7th cycle would be the birth and life of Christ. This brings Matthew to 7x7 = 49 in the Jubilee pattern. The earthly life of Jesus ends with the Paschal Mystery – his suffering and death. For Matthew this in turn leads to the ‘next year’ the 50th – the year of Jubilee – the Resurrection – the New Creation in Christ.

For Matthew, Jesus appears at the start of the sabbath-of-sabbaths moment (7x7 in the cycle). As we know from the gospels, people in Jesus’s day were also pondering, calculating, and longing for the greatest superjubilee of them all, the ‘seventy weeks’ (that is, seventy times seven years) of [Daniel 9](#): 24. The great Sabbath-Jubilee of Daniel was also imminent.

In the great Jubilee of the Resurrection of Christ, we see those themes of Redemption and restoration both of land and persons fulfilled. The earth of human nature (Adam means of the soil/earth) is restored from its fallen and captive state in corruption to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Liberty from slavery to sin and the forgiveness of sins from our first parents onwards is brought about. In Matthews gospel, when Peter asks Jesus about forgiveness Jesus responds not seven times but seventy times seven (in the original greek). Once again we see Jesus pointing to the Jubilee nature of the act of forgiveness. That whenever we forgive and restore others, we participate in the great Jubilee action of God.

If the Sabbath originally had a purpose of rest from the work of creation, after the great Jubilee of the Resurrection it now has a purpose for celebrating God’s victory over the forces of sin and evil. This is precisely what we do in the Mass, we participate in the liturgy of heaven giving God praise and thanks (thank you in Greek is Eucharitian) and we participate in Christ’s own worship of the Father.