

The reality of family life

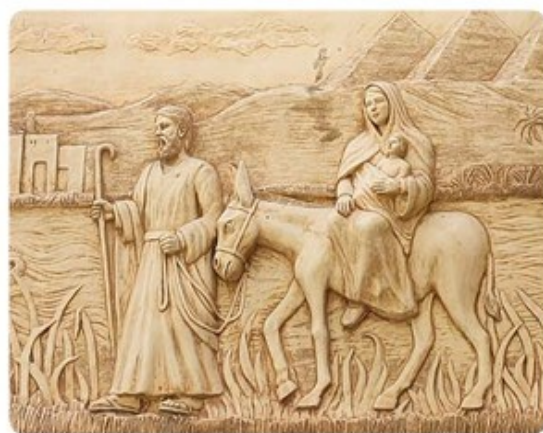


Image: The Flight into Egypt, Cairo, Egypt © Sr Janet Fearn

The artistic imagination has often been kindled by the flight into Egypt. Usually, Our Lady is shown as seated in

a meadow, feeding her child with the fruit that St Joseph is industriously pulling down from the trees. Around them flit small and engaging angels. Or, in more serious mode, we may see Mary on a donkey, orderly and composed, while her faithful Joseph either lingers behind or leads the donkey by its reins... But this is really to make light of what must have been a harrowing experience...

Both adults are small-town Jews, running away from an armed pursuer into unknown territory. They have little money. They know nobody in Egypt. All they have is an anguished determination to guard the child who has been entrusted to them. How anxious they must have been, how ashamed by their lack of resources, how profoundly aware of their dependence on God...

Joseph and Mary had a rocky start to their marriage. He, quite naturally, suspected her

of betraying him, both a great sorrow and a scandal. She, on the other hand, must have been wounded that he did not trust her. Then there was the difficult journey to Bethlehem, the astounding events there; and now there is this dangerous crisis. It must have been a time of real growth in marital love for both of them. Each had to trust the other. Only as true partners could they nourish and protect their son.

All relationships go through difficult periods, but God can help us make those very difficulties a source of deeper understanding and love. The example of the Holy Family encourages us to accept the reality of family life, which may at times be a painful reality. They are a source of hope and courage.

Sr Wendy Becket, The Art of Christmas

God loves us, God loves you all, and evil will not prevail! All of us are in God's hands. So, let us move forward, without fear, together, hand in hand with God and with one another!

Pope Leo

Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendour of true love; to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division; may all who have been hurt or scandalised find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

Pope Francis

Holy Family of Nazareth, watch over, protect and bless families everywhere, in all their joys and struggles. Bring them closer to you and to each other. I pray in a special way for my own family. You know their needs. Be with them.  Amen.

Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope Welcome the stranger

Signs of hope should also be present for migrants who leave their homelands behind in search of a better life for themselves and for their families. Their expectations must not be frustrated by prejudice and rejection. A spirit of welcome, which embraces everyone with respect for his or her dignity, should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility, lest anyone be denied the right to a dignified existence. Exiles, displaced persons and refugees, whom international tensions force to emigrate in order to avoid war, violence and discrimination, ought to be guaranteed security and access to employment and education, the means they need to find their place in a new social context.

May the Christian community always be prepared to defend the rights of those who are most vulnerable, opening wide its doors to welcome them, lest anyone ever be robbed of the hope of a better future.

Pope Francis, Spes non confundit, 13



READINGS

Today:
Ecclesiasticus
3:2-6, 12-14
Colossians
3:12-21
Matthew
2:13-15, 19-23

Monday:
1 John 2:3-11
Luke 2:22-35

Tuesday:
1 John 2:12-17
Luke 2:36-40

Wednesday:
1 John 2:18-21
John 1:1-18

Thursday:
Numbers 6:22-27
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Friday:
1 John 2:22-28
John 1:29-34

Saturday:
1 John 2:29-36
John 1:29-34

Next Sunday:
Ecclesiasticus
24:1-2, 8-12
Ephesians
1:3-6, 15-18
John 1:1-18



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



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4th Sunday of Advent & Christmastide 21st December 2025 - 5th January 2026



Mass Times and 'offered for' dedications Two weeks commencing 21st December 2025

Sunday 22nd	Saturday 21st	4pm - Paul McDonald 11am - Parish
Monday 23rd	Mass	9.30am - Sarah Stierl
Wednesday 24th The Nativity of the Lord	First Mass of Christmas	Carols 4.30pm 5pm - Tom Lally
Thursday 25th The Nativity of the Lord	Christmas Mass	11am - Mass for the people of the Parish
Friday 26th	Mass	9.30am - Olivia Smith
Saturday 27th	Vigil Mass	4pm - Rose Egan
Sunday 28th	Mass	11am - Parish
Monday 29th	Mass	9.30am - Frank Byrne
Tuesday 30th	No Mass	
Wednesday 31st	Mass	9.30am Veronica Byrne
Thursday 1st Jan	Mass	10am Sick and Infirm clergy
Friday 2nd	Mass	9.30am - Tom Lally
Saturday 3rd	Vigil Mass	4pm - Parish
Sunday 4th	Mass	11am - Forgotten Souls

Mass Offerings -

Albert & Winnie Duke (Christmas Blessing); Terry & Nellie McGrath (Christmas Blessing); Tom Lally; Margaret on her 90th Birthday; Cyril Barrett (A)

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

Altar Prayer Candles W/C 21st December

The Sanctuary	Anthony Scanlon
Sacred Heart	Carolyn Corcoran
Our Lady	Debbie & Family

Altar Prayer Candles W/C 28th December

The Sanctuary	
Sacred Heart	Anthony Scanlon
Our Lady	Tom Lally



Sacrament of Reconciliation - 30 minutes prior to the start of Mass

Thank you to everyone for all the support you've given us throughout the year and for the lovely cards and generous gifts. We wish you and your families A Happy and Holy Christmas and Blessings in the New Year. Fr Joe & Sister Dolores



Haughton Green Food Bank -Christmas Appeal

Thank you to all who donated extra items and cash for the food bank. Your support is very much appreciated.



Haughton Green Food Bank Thank you to all who continue to give donations of food and cash to the Food Bank. The Food Bank always needs donations - Any items can be left at the back of each church.

Long Life Milk, Cordial,

Instant Noodles, Savoury Rice,

Rice Pudding, Tinned Fruit,

Tinned meals - curry, chilli, stew & Bolognese,

Toiletries and Sanitary Products

Food Bank Christmas meal donations

Fresh items such as chickens, vegetables and fruit can be brought to the entrance of St Mary's Church Hall on **Monday 22nd December and Tuesday 23rd December from 10am to 12noon** These will then be taken to the Food bank, each day, for those in need. If you can't get to church they can collect items on those days. Phone or text Anne and Brian Fox on 07379794924 to arrange a time.

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?

H	A	E	L	H	A	D	U	J	A	MARY	JUDAH	ZECHARIAH
E	A	T	O	T	M	B	O	W	D	ELIZABETH	CHILD	LEAPT
L	B	I	M	E	O	Y	J	R	E	WOMB	BLESSED	FRUIT
I	L	U	R	B	M	O	W	A	S	MOTHER	JOY	PROMISE
Z	E	R	O	A	L	A	T	H	S			
A	S	F	E	Z	H	E	R	C	E			
B	E	D	L	I	H	C	O	Y	L			
T	P	A	E	L	O	T	E	A	B			
M	O	T	H	E	R	S	O	Z	L			
D	E	S	I	M	O	R	P	M	E			



Relics of St Carlo Acutis to Visit Diocese of Salford

In January, the relics of St Carlo Acutis will be hosted at two of our churches over five days, during which time the Diocese will welcome schools, parishioners and people from all over for veneration.

Carlo is the first millennial saint, and is celebrated for his profound faith and his use of the internet to log Eucharistic miracles from around the world. He was passionate about spreading the teachings of the Catholic Church up until his death from leukaemia at the age of 15.

The relics will be presented at St Mary's Church, Burnley from 28-29 January 2026 before they travel to St Patrick's Church, Collyhurst from 30 January to 1 February 2026. More information will be shared soon with parishes and on the Diocesan website and social media channels.



Christmas Day—Meal

Anyone who will be on their own on Christmas day, will be very welcome to join Councillor Denise Ward at **Victoria Park Community Centre**, between 12 and 3pm for a Christmas lunch. **Please let Councillor Ward know if you wish to attend phone 0161 336 6121 or email Denise.ward@tameside.gov.uk**

Christmas is coming

SUNDAY *Plus*

21 DECEMBER 2025

4th Sunday of Advent **Divine Office Week IV** Year A

A happy and blessed Christmas to you and yours from all of us at Redemptorist Publications

The Annunciation

And yet the quiet here retains no trace of great Archangel wings... A moment came, and that is all, a moment came and passed, and in the passing left a young girl here who was not now alone. This was not she who lifted up her head, and yet it was, and crowded days that stretch beyond will still be bound for her in sun and in the dark. Her steps will fall upon the dust and leave an imprint there, and tasks will weary her. Delicate, and now so utterly bequeathed, her strengths are yet her strengths. This is God's chosen way with men, to take men's way; and so, the streets she walks and all the roads, the shepherds and the shepherds' sheep, the winds, the firelight, Israel's hills, will find just this, no more, a woman plain upon the earth, and in her arms, a child.

John Lynch, A Woman Wrapped in Silence



The Annunciation fresco in church St Anton by Fritz Kunz (1921). Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com

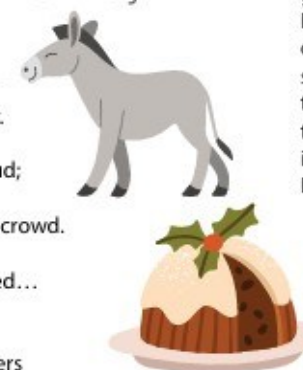
Our Mother Mary always wants to walk at our side, to remain close to us, to help us with her intercession and her love.

Pope Leo

Just a Little Donkey

Just a little donkey, but on my back I bore the one and only Saviour the world was waiting for. Just a little donkey, but I was strong and proud; I gladly carried Mary through the chaos of the crowd. I brought her to a stable where she made a tiny bed... a place for Baby Jesus to lay his little head. I pray the world remembers that special Christmas night, when just a little donkey carried Heaven's precious light.

Author unknown



Mince pies and Christmas pudding

Christmas and mince pies go together, but before the Reformation, they were oblong or oval in shape. The pastry base symbolised the manger, whilst the filling was the straw and the top the swaddling clothes in which Mary wrapped the Baby Jesus.

Today's Christmas pudding is sweet and served with brandy sauce or brandy butter, but this was not always so. In medieval times, the pudding often

included rabbit, poultry, pheasant and partridge in its list of ingredients. By the end of the sixteenth century, eggs, dried fruit, breadcrumbs and brandy were added to thicken and flavour the mixture. The Christmas pudding traditionally had thirteen ingredients to represent Jesus and the twelve apostles. It was only in 1714, during the reign of King George I, that meat disappeared from the recipe. He also introduced the custom of pouring brandy over the pudding and setting it alight, apparently reminding the eaters of Jesus' passion, while the holly decoration represents the crown of thorns.

Lord God, be with us as we prepare to welcome your Son Jesus into our hearts and lives at Christmas. Watch over, protect and bless our families and all those whom we love. Amen.

READINGS

Today: Isaiah 7:10-14 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-24	Mass at Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12 Titus 3:4-7 Luke 2:15-20
Monday: 1 Samuel 1:24-28 Luke 1:46-56	Mass During the Day: Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-6 John 1:1-18
Tuesday: Malachi 3:1-4, 4:5-6 Luke 1:57-66	Friday: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59 Matthew 10:17-22
Wednesday: Mass in the Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16 Luke 1:67-79	Saturday: 1 John 1:1-4 John 20:1, 2-8
Thursday: Vigil Mass: Isaiah 62:1-5 Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 Matthew 1:1-25	Next Sunday: Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6, 12-14 Colossians 3:12-21 Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23
Mass During the Night: Isaiah 9:1-7 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14	