



Sunday 13th December 2020

Weekly Newsletter

St. Anne's Catholic Church

Lynton Avenue Weeping Cross Stafford, ST17 0EA. Telephone: 01785 661012 - Website www.st-annes-st.org.uk

St. Patrick's Catholic Church

48 Sandon Road, Stafford ST16 3HF. Telephone 01785 661012 - Website www.stpatricksstafford.co.uk

Email: stannestpatrick.stafford@rcaob.org.uk

Parish Administrator: Father Robert Devaney - Parish Secretary: Marie Badger

Deacon: Rev. Michael Horsnall

The parishes are part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Registered Charity No.234216

ST. ANNE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lynton Avenue, ST17 0EA

Telephone: 01785 663128 Fax: 01785 662987

Email: office@st-annes-weepingcross.staffs.sch.uk

Head Teacher: Mr. M. Killeen

ST. PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Marston Road, ST16 3BT

Telephone: 01785 413275

Email: office@st-patricks-stafford.staffs.sch.uk

Principal: Mr. M. Brandon

TIMES OF HOLY MASS AND LITURGIES THIS WEEK

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Day	Date	Mass Time	Church	Liturgical Day	Memoria	Mass Intention
Sat	12 th	1:00pm	St Patrick's	Vigil		Intentions of May Galvin
		6:30pm	St Anne's	Vigil		Fr. Robert Wright RIP
Sun	13 th	8:00am	St Patrick's	Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)		People of the Parish
		9:30am	St Anne's			Kevin Walsh (special Intention)
Mon	14 th	9:30am	St Anne's	St John of the Cross	Memoria	Fr Jack Kennedy RIP
Tue	15 th	9:30am	St Patrick's		Advent Feria	Intentions of Richard & Martina
Wed	16 th	No Mass			Advent Feria	
Thu	17 th	6:30pm	St Patrick's		Advent Feria	Peggy Toner RIP
Fri	18 th	6:30pm	St Anne's		Advent Feria	John & Kathleen Walsh RIP
Sat	19 th	1:00pm	St Patrick's	Vigil		Patty Tiernan RIP
		6:30pm	St Anne's	Vigil		June Reeve RIP
Sun	20 th	8:00am	St Patrick's	Fourth Sunday of Advent		People of the Parish
		9:30am	St Anne's			Intentions of Winifred Meehan

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM By Appointment

Prayers for the sick: **St Patrick's:** Phylis Bowers, Susan Prince, Tim Tiernan, Gregory McKinlay, Linda Reavy, Martha Porter, Cecylia Kotara **St Anne's:** Michael Glover, Patricia Walters, Thomas McCormick, Mary Terry, Bernard Lundberg, Cath Miles, Walter Rogers, Richard McMahon, Patsy Connelly Smith, Colin Wise.

Prayers for the departed loved ones whose anniversaries occur at this time: *[St. Patrick's]* John Moore, Julia Brody, James Monaghan, Carmela Notarianni, Florence Preston, Winifred Cliff, Alice Sheehan, Jacobus Ashun, Mary Harding, Jean Taylor, James Crossan, Joyce Wynter, Simon Collins and Bertram Shotton. *[St Anne's]* Peggy Giles, Mary Chatterley, Alec Gourley, John Grennan, John Helks, Patrick McMahon, Monica Beardmore, Kathleen McMahon and Lottie Riley.

Income 6 th Dec	Source	Gift Aid	Non-Gift Aid	Standing Order	Total	Attendance
St Anne's	Offertory	£77.00	£122.20	£283.84	£483.04	Sat 38
						Sun 36
St. Patrick's	Offertory	£161.00	£127.10	£146.23	£434.33	Sat 18
						Sun 22

On the Archdiocese website there is a standing order and Gift Aid form for parishioners so they can continue to give at this time. Please direct any such enquiries to:

<https://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/pages/FAQS/category/finance-resources> Blessings Fr. Bob

***This email is from the archdiocese:** Just to let you know, there is a donate **BUTTON (TOP RIGHT)** on the home page of the diocesan website – www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk

Parish Tote 150 Club October 2020 Winners. Thank you for your support. There are a lot of numbers available at only £4 per number per month. Further details from Marie on 01785 661012.

*A big thank you to those parishioners who have filled out new Standing Orders to help support the churches at this critical time. I am grateful to those who have continued to support their respective churches in this way for many years. If you can join them and make such a commitment for our offertory support; whether weekly, fortnightly, monthly or annually, it would make such a difference. You remain in control for as long as you want. Those who use gift aid envelopes will find new ones for this financial year, labelled and numbered at the back of each church. Some parishioners might like to know that the parish office (St Anne's) can always be used as a 'drop-off' for envelopes. Now that we have started public Masses once more, there will be large collection bins placed on entry and exit**

At this time though it makes a 'sink or swim' difference to your church. Without that money coming in, our ability to meet the ever mounting expenses (of maintenance, consumables, utilities and fabric upkeep, not to mention health and safety) will diminish. Also, for St Anne's, the regular income from Hall Hire has understandably dried up and this will make a massive difference. A significant amount of unavoidable remedial work is also planned shortly for St Anne's church roof, so the outgoings remain significant. We continue to pay Council Tax; Water; Electricity; Gas. We are all in uncharted territory, an uncertain future, but if you are able to please help in any amount you can afford. Very many thanks

The obligation to attend Sunday Mass is still suspended and we can avail ourselves of weekday Masses to enable sensible spacing on weekends (some in the weekday evenings for those who work?)

St Anne's Roof Appeal (Update)

***The remedial work to the lower roof has now been completed.** We are appealing for any donations St Anne's community can donate to this work; my humble appreciation to those who have already given so generously; we are gradually on our way - looking at a sum approaching £10,000. (We are well over a third of the way there). Next year we plan to try to remedy ongoing problems to the upper roof. Two special baskets are at the entrance and exit of the church dedicated to this special fund. Please accept my sincere and grateful thanks for any donations that you may be able to make. I am very conscious of the straitened*

Return to Public Masses: Our Mass schedule has returned to what it was before Nov 5th.

We all know that the Christmas celebration period will seem very strange this year in its family context [three households] but our parishes intend to provide **Christmas Masses for Catholic Stafford**. We are offering Christmas vigil Masses in each parish church (one early, one later) and Christmas Morning Masses in each parish **LOOK BELOW:** The news is that no matter what tier we are in, Masses can still go ahead. One important question I must ask our present volunteers of cleaners and stewards at St Anne's and St Patrick's is whether you will be available over the Christmas Eve or morning, or both. But, any parishioner who is 'able' may offer their assistance in cleaning a bench or chairs after Mass they attend. (Many hands make light work).



CHRISTMAS MASSES:**Catholic Stafford**

DEC		<u>St Anne's</u>	<u>St Patrick's</u>	<u>St Austin's</u>
24 th	EVE	5:00pm	4:00pm	6:00pm
24 th	EVE	9:00pm	7:00pm	8:00pm
25 th	MORNING	9:00am	10:00am	11:00am

Unfortunately, due to the workable 'maximum' capacity of each church and the impossibility of trying to estimate the numbers for each Mass, we are having a booking system. We have one dedicated mobile number specifically for our Christmas Masses **(07856918465)** Please either call or text leaving your name, contact no., the Mass you wish to book and the total number in your group (including yourself). The phone is checked every evening and any bookings recorded. This is the only way to book a Mass. No bookings can be made by email. *In order to provide opportunity for as many people as possible to attend at Christmas, we ask please that you attend just one Mass.*

Thank you to everyone who has already booked places for the Christmas Masses. Please assume that any bookings placed before December 11th are confirmed. The number of bookings has meant it is taking longer to respond. **The 4.00pm Mass at St Patricks is now fully booked.** There is still some available at the 5.00pm and 6.00pm. The quieter Masses are the 7.00pm, 8.00pm and 9.00pm on Christmas Eve and the 9.00am, 10.00am and 11.00am on Christmas Day.

This sort of arrangement goes against our way of doing things, doesn't it, but sadly, **TO KEEP WITHIN LAWFUL GUIDELINES, WE HAVE TO WATCH NUMBERS.** Be assured that if, during the coming weeks, if places are booked and demand is high, extra Masses may be put on Christmas Morning. **With this in mind, it may mean that some may have to attend a different Mass – maybe a later one on Christmas Eve or even coming on Christmas Day. Also, it's a chance for us to remember that each day of the Christmas Octave week is really an extended Christmas Day!** Very Many thanks for your understanding. (Very important end note: we three parishes are appealing for as many stewards and cleaners as possible over these two days of Masses, so please, please indicate, by phone, email, or text, what Masses you might attend, and also if you could help in a neighbouring parish). Many thanks to all who do so much, but we do need extra hands for Christmas.

All our churches will be open at least 30 minutes before each Mass begins and we would encourage people to arrive early. This enables the stewards to show you to your seats, avoiding last minute rushes. Details for the Track and Trace will have already been collected via the booking system.

Sadly, because of restrictions, the Christmas Masses won't have any congregational singing.

MISSIO: (St Patrick's) *At the back of St Patrick's parishioners will find the latest Autumn edition of Missio's magazine. Please help yourself to a copy. There are many interesting articles included. Many thanks to Graham for his help in liaising with the charity.* If parishioners who have RED BOXES could continue to donate their boxes using either the online donations page at www.missio.org.uk, by phone, cheque or text that would be great. If you use your postcode as requested, you will be able to be matched to Missio's database and the totals will be attributed to the parish totals. **[There are also 2021 MISSIO Calendars available at the back of church].** Many thanks.

Friends of the Holy Land: We have now entered the season of **Advent** during which we usually have Crib Donations for **Friends of the Holy Land**. This year has been particularly 'ruthless' for them in terms of lack of pilgrims (especially during this coming Christmas period when Bethlehem would normally be packed) and lack of sales for their wonderful artefacts etc. We will be arranging for this year's Crib donations from the First Sunday of Advent, through to the Christmas period, but of course our lockdown may interfere with this. Just drop off at the presbytery if you wish. However, you can donate through their website (where our Christian brothers and sisters' desperate situation is made evident). It is: <https://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk> . Any amount of assistance would be very welcome. Many thanks

Women's Refuge (gifts for the Christmas Tree): As usual, we will focus our gifts for the refuge but this year we will offer donations in form of cash or vouchers (supermarket). I have ordered two trees (smaller ones) for both churches and, rather than present bulky gifts [such as bedding, towels etc.] the Refuge would really appreciate vouchers because it eliminates the need for storage, which becomes more problematic in these times. We are now back in church from 3rd

December and will include the 2nd Sunday of Advent. Vouchers or cash in envelopes can always be left at the presbytery and I shall place them under the trees. Mark them either St Anne or St Patrick. Many Thanks

The **SOWER:** The latest edition of this well produced archdiocesan periodical is available at the back of each church. Please help yourselves; many interesting articles concerning our archdiocese are to be found.

HOMILY FOR SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

'It's great to be back home'. I think we can agree that most of us have felt like that on a number of occasions, and it's usually after a holiday or break somewhere. So, if we've enjoyed the away break why might we feel that it's good to be back? Well, there's no getting away from the security and familiarity of what 'home' means to us. Just as we looked last week at how God was drawing us all back home to Him through making our paths straight and filling in the valleys, calling us from the fringes of our loneliness and destitution, so the Gospel and Isaiah carry on that theme. And, Isaiah is especially important here because we are reading chapter 61 which is one of his very latest prophecies. The tradition of the great prophet Isaiah admonishes and consoles God's People from before the exile to their return, and it is the consolation that's given to Israel once they return to their original homeland from Babylon. Now, Isaiah has been anointed by the Lord and been called to bring good news to the people and 'bind up' their broken hearts. There's now great joy in being given a completely fresh start.

But we know, don't we, that for any of us to be able to really appreciate and make use of fresh starts, we have to try to clear out the 'rubbish' in our lives and once again, let God IN. And this requires from us humility doesn't it? We know that, after we've experienced confession or reconciliation, we walk out cleansed and able to pick up our pieces once again. There shouldn't be any pride or dishonesty otherwise there would be no way to return to the path to salvation. It is in the figure of John the Baptist that humility is stark and open for all to see. Because, unlike the description of the Baptist in other Gospels, such as his clothing and dietary habits, the evangelist John rather leads us straightaway into the theological controversy about the Baptist's identity and what his role really is. John the Baptist is essentially the 'pointer'. His main task is to prepare the people's hearts for accepting Christ and to show them who the Messiah is. And notice the way he does it is to keep emphasising who he isn't: "I am not the Christ, I am not Elijah, and I am not the Prophet". But the evangelist does say who John is. He is witness; his role is to point a way from himself towards the Other, the one more worthy by far. And this brings us, really, to the greatness of John the Baptist – he is great because he steps right back into the 'shadows' to allow Jesus to take the lead. We need to do the same; to allow Christ to completely take over us and for ministers, for pastors, it's even more vital. We let John the Baptist be the example for us here: 'the Baptist is the witness...Jesus the reality, John is the voice....Jesus is the Word, and where the Baptist is the lamp....Jesus is the light.' So, if we are to be brothers and sisters of Christ to bring Him to others, we have to prevent ourselves becoming "the issue". We shouldn't be anything beyond ourselves. John the Baptist challenges us to let go of all pride and false claims because the road to greatness is the road which starts from knowing our nothingness. Then we can let God be God. Jesus stands among us....unknown.....unless we witness to Him. During this Advent we need to put to ourselves the questions:

'Am I a voice preparing the way for Christ in others? 'Am I a witness to Christ in my family, my work, my social life, my language, political attitudes, my prejudices?

'Am I ashamed of my Christian identity when challenged? Prayer is what makes us ready to meet Jesus; we may have neglected Him, we have not prayed constantly, we haven't give thanks to God, yet Christ is amongst us and the more we pray the more we live a life of thanksgiving, and the more joyful will be our meeting with Him at the end of our time and the end of time. This is why, when we return from our 'meanderings' our 'wanderings' and our illusory 'holidays' from reality, the presence of Christ within us gives us a home-coming to be grateful for.