

# St Osmund's Catholic Church, Gainford

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

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## Hogarth Partnership

St Anne, St Augustine, St Mary, St Osmund, Holy Family, St Teresa, St Thomas Aquinas, SS William & Francis De Sale

### FoodBank: The Well:

46 East Green, West Auckland. DL14 9HJ. Opening times: Wednesday-Friday 9am - 3pm  
Items may be left at the Foodbanks during their opening times or placed in St. Osmund's Church porch.

### Please Pray for:

**The sick of the Parish:** Patrick Doherty, Nico Human, Kate Konig, Patrick Heffernan, Hilary Fletcher, Mike Griffiths, Luca Gallucci, Pat Aveson and Matthis Klein

### Offertory

If you wish to make your donations directly to St. Osmund's. Bank account details are:

HSBC: D.H & N Gainford St. Osmund's.

Account No. 41164015.

Sort Code 40-34-18.

### Safeguarding

The Parish operates in accordance with Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and Diocese's policies and procedures at all times. Details of our Parish Safeguarding Representative can be found on the notice board in the porch and the Parish Centre, or alternatively the Diocesan Safeguarding Team can be contacted on 0191 2433305 or at [safeguarding@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@diocesehn.org.uk)

**Jubilee 2025:** We celebrate this year of pilgrimage and prayer, celebration and reconciliation, seeking to be Pilgrims of Hope There's more information about the Jubilee Year on the Diocesan website at <https://www.bit.ly/DHNjubilee2025>. To aid your journey through this jubilee year, **copies of a companion booklet are available at the back of church.** A donation of £1 is suggested.



## 4th Sunday of Advent

**Theme: God with us**

*'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel' — which means, God with us.*

**St Osmund's will be open for Parish Mass on Tuesdays at 10.00am.**

**Saturday 20th December 6.30pm**

**Sunday 28th December 9.30am**

**Saturday 3rd January 6.30pm**

**Sunday 11th January 9.30am**

### Christmas Mass Times

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December** – 6pm Carols,

followed by 6.30pm Vigil Mass of Christmas

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December** – 9.30am Parish Mass

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> December** – 10am, Parish Mass for S. Stephen's Day

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> January** – 10am, Parish Mass for Mary, Mother of God (New Year's Day)

*Flyers with the times of Christmas Masses are available at the back of church.*



### Peace for the people of Ukraine

*We continue to pray earnestly for peace in Ukraine, joining our prayers to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart – may her prayers bring a swift end to the conflict, and consolation to the bereaved and to the many thousands of refugees.*

### Cake Sale

Thanks to all. Our Cake Sale last week raised a magnificent £228 in aid of our Churches Together Christmas Appeal for Darlington Assistance for Refugees. A reminder that we will be continuing to collect for Darlington Assistance for Refugees during this season of Advent.

There is a flyer giving further details available at the back of church.



**First reading Isaiah 7:10-14**

**‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive.’**

In those days: The Lord spoke to Ahaz: ‘Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.’ But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.’ And Isaiah said, ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.’

**Responsorial Psalm 24(23):1-6 R cf.6**

**Let the Lord enter; he is the king of glory.**

The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness,  
the world, and those who dwell in it.

It is he who set it on the seas;  
on the rivers he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?

Who shall stand in his holy place?

The clean of hands and pure of heart,  
whose soul is not set on vain things.

Blessings from the Lord shall he receive,  
and right reward from the God who saves him.

Such are the people who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

**Second reading Romans 1:1-7**

**Jesus Christ, descended from David, Son of God.**

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an Apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Gospel Acclamation Matthew 1:23**

**Alleluia, alleluia.** Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel — which means, God with us. **Alleluia.**

**Gospel Matthew 1:18-24**

**Jesus was born of Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph, son of David.**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame,

resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel’ — which means, God with us.

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife.

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**Feast Days this week**

**Tuesday 23rd December:** St John of Canty

**Thursday 25th December:** The Nativity of the Lord

**Friday 26th December:** St Stephen

**Saturday 27th December:** St John

**The Cycle of Prayer**

**Expectant Mothers**

especially on 4th Sunday of Advent

**Background**

The Gospel on the 4th Sunday of Advent focusses on the role of Mary in our salvation. Over the three year cycle the gospel tells of the betrothal of Mary to Joseph, the Annunciation and the Visitation. The stories prepare us for the Birth of our Lord at Christmas.

**Prayer**

*God has brought gladness and light to the world  
through the Virgin Mary’s  
delivery of her son.*

*Grant the prayer of all mothers to be  
as they ask for the birth  
of a healthy child.*

*May they safely deliver  
a son or daughter*

*to be numbered among your family,  
to serve you in all things,  
and to gain eternal life.*

adapted from the Book of Blessing

**Weekly Reflection and Daily Readings for Advent**

**2025.** Advent is a time of preparation and to reflect, and hold onto, the messages of hope, peace, joy and love which God promised to us in the birth of Christ Jesus.

Members of our Diocesan Writing Team offer this Advent resource to help guide a daily space for reading of the Scripture, reflection and prayer. In it you will find a reflection based on the theme of each week of Advent and an easy-to-follow reference to the readings for each day. The reflections will be available to view and download on the homepage of the Diocesan website from Friday 28 November [www.diocesehn.org.uk](http://www.diocesehn.org.uk)

**What's in a name?**

*King Abaz could be honoured as the patron of skeptics. He simply would not rely on God to help him through the greatest crisis in his life. In the crisis facing his kingdom, he preferred to trust in his soldiers and his military plans. Are we much the same? Do we trust only the range of our own power and resources, and turn to the true God only as an extra insurance, a vague source of possible help in moments of crisis? But such faith is weak and inadequate. A fuller kind of faith would see us relying on God's invisible, helping presence, not just in those moments when human support fails us. Real faith accepts the reality of God in every moment of life. It sees God as a dimension of all our experience, literally, the Emmanu-El, God-with-us.*

*The promise that God is with us was not for Isaiah's time only, it is for our own. Even now the sign of that continuing presence is a young woman and her child, the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus. For Joseph the unexpected pregnancy of Mary was not a sign to confirm his trust either in her or God, it was a contradictory sign. In the hours of his darkness he found the enlightening Spirit of God, the Spirit who teaches us not to judge by what our eyes see or by what our ears hear (cf. Is 11:3.) This gospel shows us that the signs God gives are not always the ones we would choose for ourselves. He gives signs for those who are willing to take on the darkness of doubt in openness and sincerity.*

*What can a name tell us about a particular person? Not much, usually. Names like Helen, Paula, Sharon or Jason are useful for distinguishing various members of a family, but they don't describe the people themselves. With some Biblical names it is different. For instance, Abraham meant "Father of a great people" (Gen. 17:5) and Moses meant "Rescued from the Waters" (Ex. 2:10.) Above all, our blessed Lord has names which are full of meaning. "Jesus" means "God saves," "Christ" means "God's Anointed Messiah" and the name "Emmanuel" in today's Gospel, means "God in our midst."*

*How important is Jesus for our religious belief? Be honest. Ask the question what is the heart of Christianity and what will people say? Something to do with loving your neighbour; keeping the law; going to church on Sunday? Will there be any mention of Jesus Christ, who is at the very centre of our faith. Ghandi once said, "If only you Christians took your Christ to heart.."*

*Jesus shares our lot, our life-experience and our troubles. At Christmas we will concentrate on the simplicity and poverty of Our Lord's birth: how human he was, born of a young woman, not in luxurious comfort, but in the discomfort of a stable. That shows him as one of us, the human side of "Emmanuel." This gospel however mentions the divine origin of Jesus. Although he has a human mother, he has not a human father, but was conceived in Mary by the power of God. This unique way of coming into life, with God as father, and the virgin Mary as mother, underlines who Jesus truly is: both God and man, one of ourselves and yet one with the eternal God.*

*If this seems mysterious to us, it must have been baffling for St Joseph. Close to Mary as he was, and finding her pregnant without any involvement by him, Joseph could only accept in faith what God's messenger told him, that the child was in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. With great patience and humility, Joseph accepted the part for which God had chosen him, as guardian and foster-father to our Lord and Saviour. This kind of faithful acceptance is asked from each of us, when Christ comes into our lives, as "God-with-us. [associationofcatholicpriests.ie](http://associationofcatholicpriests.ie)*

**Neurodiversity and our Faith Research**

We have been asked to share the following. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales and Birmingham Newman University are conducting research into Neurodiversity and our Faith. If you are an adult neurodivergent Catholic or a caregiver of a neurodivergent Catholic, they would like to hear from you. Your experiences will help them to become more inclusive and responsive to your needs.

To find out more and to complete the short surveys, please visit: [www.godwhospeaks.uk/neurodivergent-catholic-surveys](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/neurodivergent-catholic-surveys)

**Make Your Giving Go Further with Gift Aid!**

Did you know that if you're a UK taxpayer, your donations to the parish can go even further at no extra cost to you? With Gift Aid, the government adds 25% to your gift, helping us support our church, ministries, and community projects even more!

Sign up today by contacting your local parish Gift Aid Organiser or visit <https://forms.office.com/e/BrxQTPnn3a?origin=lprLink>

Together, we can strengthen our parish and continue our mission to serve God and our community. Thank you for your generosity!



**Is Christmas Christ's actual birthday?**

It seems that a regular feature of the Advent and Christmas seasons is a trail of commentary claiming that Christmas is really some sort of repackaged pagan festival. Various accounts float around, the fact that various different pagan festivals are mentioned itself suggests that this isn't entirely the case. It's worth looking into the true origins of Christmas, why we celebrate it when we do, because this ties Christmas to Easter and shows the great unity of the Faith.

The first point to note is that there certainly is something pre-Christian about having a large celebration in the middle of winter. It's cold, dark, and otherwise could be pretty miserable; it's also a time when there is less work to be done in the world of farming, and notably a time when there was a large supply of meat as animals would be slaughtered rather than be fed the limited supply of fodder over the winter. Putting all of this together, and it's no surprise that across the northern hemisphere people have sought to brighten the season with a celebration.

But the specific celebration of Christmas on 25 December is a comparatively late addition to the Christian calendar. Easter was celebrated from the earliest days for which we have records, but the earliest reference to celebrating Christmas on 25 December is from around the year 350. There was actually already a feast on 25, the martyr S. Anastasia, who got rather ignored when the more important celebration came along.

But that raises the question of why this date was chosen? Is there anything to suggest that this is the actual date of Christ's birth? The simple answer is that we have no direct evidence of when Christ was actually born, and Christmas doesn't really claim to be the date, merely the celebration of the fact of his birth. But it also isn't an entirely random date.

By around the year 200 it was reckoned that the date for the crucifixion was 25 March, finding this date involves matching together the lunar calendar used by Jews (and therefore used to date the Passover) with the solar calendar used by the Roman (and passed on to us). At this time there was a widely held belief that great figures had a certain perfection of life by living for a precise number of years – unsurprisingly this view was applied to Christ and if he died on 25 March he had to begin his life on 25 March.

As the calendar of celebrations grew, 25 March became the Feast of the Annunciation, often called Lady Day in England, when we celebrate that moment of Christ's conception as Gabriel visits Our Lady. Incidentally, this also ties into the feast of the Nativity of S. John the Baptist, on 24 June, his conception (and therefore birth) being six months before that of Christ. As the Church came to believe that Christ was conceived on 25 March, it became natural to celebrate his birth on 25 December (nine months later), and so Christmas gained a standard date.

One of the common allegations refers to the coincidence of Christmas and the winter solstice; this has a mixture of truth and falsehood to it. There is no reasonable claim that Christians 'stole' a solstice festival, as the Roman religion didn't celebrate the solstice. However, Christians have often noted that we celebrate the coming of the Light of the World just as the sun starts to give more light to us.

The important point for us all to remember is that the Light of the World did come to us. Christ was born, bringing God's presence into our human life. We all need a celebration in the middle of winter, and there is no greater cause for celebration than Christ. – **Fr. Thomas.**

**Communion from the chalice**

. If you are interested in helping with the Mass in this way, please let Fr. Thomas know.

**Parish Council Meeting Minutes:** Available to view on the noticeboard in the Parish Centre

**School Governors** – please take a moment to look at the poster in the porch regarding schools governors, and consider whether this could be a way in which you would be willing to help in the life and mission of the Church.

**Cafod World Gifts**

Cafod have sent copies of this year's brochure for 'World Gifts', copies are available at the back of church if you would like to buy some of these alternative gifts.

**Walk with Me Advent Booklets**

A Journey of Prayer for the Advent Jubilee 2025 are available at the back of church **Price £1**  
Advent Calendars for our young people will also be available **Free**. Please pick one up

**Churches Together Carol Service**

Churches Together in Gainford will hold their annual family carol service today  
**Sunday 21 December, 6pm at St Mary's Church.**  
All most welcome



**Best wishes for a safe, happy and holy Christmas**