

Parish of St Margaret Clitherow

Feast of the Holy Family (B)

28th December 2014



PASTORAL AREA TEAM

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Deacons: Rev. Robert Hewertson & Rev. Anthony Arrowsmith

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Psalter Week 1
Readings Sunday - Feast of the Holy Family
Weekdays - Octave of the Nativity

Today **Feast of the Holy Family (B)**
Monday **Feast of St Thomas of Canterbury**
Thursday **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**
Friday St. Basil the Great & St. Gregory Nazianzen
Sunday **Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord**



GOSPEL REFLECTION

This weekend, we celebrate the great feast of the Holy Family. When Jesus was eight days old, Mary and Joseph gave him the name that God had chosen, a name that means "Saviour". A few weeks later, they took him to the Temple, in accordance with the Jewish Law, to present him to the Lord. Simeon and Anna were holy people who had dedicated their lives to the service of God and God's chosen people. They knew the promise of the Messiah, but did not know his identity or when he would come. Simeon had long prayed that he would not die before he saw the Messiah for himself. Although the Gospel does not say so, Anna probably did likewise. Nothing particularly distinguished the Holy Family from any other young couple and their baby. Yet God touched the hearts of Simeon and Anna so that they recognised Jesus as more than "just" another infant. Jesus would be "the light of the Gentiles". For Simeon, this was a prophetic moment. He perceived something of the suffering that would come to Mary simply because she was the faithful mother of Jesus. A "sword" of sorrow would pierce her heart. Mary, the new mother, found her joy turned to pain. Joseph, so faithful and loving towards Mary and Jesus, also found his world turned upside down. Yet Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna all shared the joy of knowing that this tiny baby was also the Messiah, the hope of the world, the one for whom generations of faithful people had waited.

No one who saw Jesus, Mary and Joseph would have known that they were witnessing the dawn of a new age. Simeon and Anna only recognised the Holy Family because God was active in the situation. It took faith to see beyond a newborn baby to the crucifixion and the resurrection. Simeon needed courage to warn Mary that her joy also involved pain. Joseph would be presented with a responsibility he had never anticipated. According to tradition, Joseph died before Jesus began his adult ministry. Although we do not know this definitely, it would seem that he was no longer around to support Mary when she was most in need of his quiet strength and fidelity. There is certainly no mention of him in the Gospel during Jesus' public ministry and the accounts of his death and resurrection. Family life is not always a bed of roses, as most families can testify.

Every family will have problems to face. This is simply part of life itself. Every family will know troubles and sorrows. Sometimes families break up because the problems become too many, or the challenges of living together become too great. At such times they may be in special need of our concern and support. But there can be an unbreakable bond, a unique friendship and an unflinching strength that carries a family through good times and bad. Every family has moments of great joy as well as times that are difficult, when it is only the love between them that gives them the courage they need as they face things they had never expected and would never have wanted. Mary and Joseph gave Jesus the foundation that prepared him for Calvary – and also for Easter Sunday. May their example and their prayers bring our families courage in the bad times, and joy in the good times.

Psalm Response

He, the Lord, is God. He remembers his covenant for ever.

Gospel Acclamation

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

LEIGH PASTORAL AREA

Parish of St Margaret Clitherow

St Ambrose Barlow
Astley
St Gabriel's
Higher Folds
Holy Family
Boothstown
Sacred Heart
Hindsford
St Richard's
Atherton

Parish of St Edmund Arrowsmith

Our Lady of the Rosary
Sacred Heart
St Joseph's
Twelve Apostles
Leigh

Archdiocesan Mission Statement



Taking to heart the last words of the Lord Jesus, we will go into the world to proclaim the Good News to the whole of creation.

PASTORAL LETTER

The Sunday between Christmas Day and New Year's Day is always dedicated to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. At a time of year when we think in a special way of our loved ones, sometimes travelling great distances to be with them for Christmas, this is a beautiful Feast to have at the very heart of our celebrations.

Today we rejoice in the part that Mary, Joseph and Jesus all play in God's plan for his people. Each and every person is made in God's image (cf. *Gen 1:27*), but we are not made in isolation – we are all members of a family, and in our love for one another we reflect the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus' Birth was the outpouring of God's love into our troubled world, in which the hopes and fears of all times and places are met; but every new life is, in some way, a sign of hope for us – and Jesus, like all of us, was born into a family. We often talk about Jesus, Mary and Joseph individually, and think about how important they are to our spiritual lives, but today's Feast is different – we pray to them together, as a family. So today is a celebration of love – of God's love for us, of our love for one another, and of the love that creates our families and binds them together.

When the love of a family overflows, so that what begins as one person's love for another is made flesh in the gift of a new life, the love which that couple shares goes beyond them. In welcoming the gift of a child, that love becomes a sign to their children, family and friends of God's creative work. That is why marriage is fundamental to our society.

Married life is an adventure, and a risky one at that. We can see that in the Holy Family. Mary's loving acceptance of her God-given role in his redemptive plan led to the Birth of Jesus, in whom God's love is made flesh, 'made visible' for us (*Rom 8:39*) – but she could so easily have been swamped with hatred and disdain by those who knew her. Joseph's love for Mary meant that he took a great risk in marrying a pregnant girl; it threatened his reputation, but Joseph, the just man, stood by Mary in her hour of need. Even Jesus himself was at risk, with King Herod seeking to destroy him, and we must never forget those many people throughout the world who have died out of man's inhumanity to man, suffering as God's holy innocents even today.

But marriage is also a vocation; it builds our society, and enriches it with loving relationships that knit us together 'till death do us part'. The unity and indissolubility of marriage remind us of God's love for us, a love that is total, unconditional and everlasting. Whether we are single or married, we all hope to be one in Christ in the future, and marriage gives us a clear sign of this call to deep communion with God in the present time: in Christ, God has made 'a new and eternal covenant' with us, and that covenant is reflected in the love of husband and wife.

Of course, what I have described is an ideal that is only achievable by deep commitment and the grace of God. Many couples are not able to live up to this calling and for all sorts of reasons their marriages break down. This is not only a tragedy for the family in question, especially the children, but also has far-reaching consequences for our society.

Last October, Bishops and other delegates from around the world met Pope Francis in Rome for a special Synod of Bishops to discuss *pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelisation*. Some of the most powerful speeches at the Synod came from married couples, who were able to speak to the Pope and Bishops about the joys and sorrows of family life in the world in which we live. The work of that Synod will continue this year, with a further meeting of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015; that meeting will look at *the vocation and mission of the family in the*

Church and in the contemporary world. In this time between these two Synods, our Holy Father has asked us to reflect on both these themes with true spiritual discernment.

The Church always acts under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Please ask for this in your prayers: think about the situation of the family today – your own family, and families across our Diocese, country and world; pray for families and ask God to enlighten the Church so that we can work to support married couples and family life. Above all, pray for your own families, that they may be strengthened in love by the gift of God's spirit.

It may also be useful for you to join together in your parishes, praying together and discussing the issues that face the family today. I want to take this opportunity to encourage you to gather in your parishes, schools, chaplaincies and homes to have these conversations between now and Easter Sunday (5 April 2015), so that your deliberations can be compiled and submitted by Pentecost Sunday (24 May 2015). Your parish priest will be able to give you questions for discussion and other guidance that the Bishops of England & Wales have produced to help us.

The views and experiences of married couples and single people, those who have had long and loving marriages, those who have suffered the pain of divorce and separation, and those who have alternative lifestyles, are all necessary for the Synod to discern, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an effective pastoral approach for those called to marriage, as well as the role of marriage in the Church's mission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness.

The Church must always defend the sanctity of human life, and support marriage and family life as the bedrock of society. For this reason, I believe that married people have an important mission in the world. It would be good for you to reflect upon how your family, by the grace of God, is 'salt of the earth' and 'light for the world' (*Mt 5:13,14*), a place of nurturing our young people, caring for our older people, and

PARISH NOTES

Newsletter

Please ensure items for the newsletter are sent in by Wednesday evening. Thank you.

Clergy Addresses

Fr Paul Seddon

St Richard's Presbytery, Mayfield Street, Atherton, Manchester M46 0AQ

Fr Dave Heywood

Holy Family Presbytery, 208 Chaddock Lane, Boothstown, Worsley, Manchester M28 1DN

Finance

The monies for the five church communities of the Parish of St Margaret Clitherow are held in one account. So please make all cheques payable to **St Margaret Clitherow** (Please note the spelling of 'Clitherow'). Thank you.

Pastoral Area Website

www.leighpastoralarea.co.uk

Catholic School Websites

www.st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk

www.athertonsacredheart.wigan.sch.uk

www.boothstownhollyfamily.wigan.sch.uk

www.saintambrosebarlow.co.uk

www.saintgabrielsprimary.co.uk

www.saintrichards.wigan.sch.uk

handing on the faith to our children and our neighbours.

I hope that your conversations will inspire your prayer and action on behalf of all families, especially your own. I join my heart and prayers with yours, asking God to bless all families, so that they may be a sign of God's kingdom coming and his will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

When you look at the Holy Family in your Christmas cribs at home and in church, please ask Jesus, Mary and Joseph to be with you and your families this coming year, to guide you, strengthen you and bless you. Let us consecrate to the Holy Family our families, parishes, schools, chaplaincies, convents and all the other organisations and societies which make up our archdiocesan family, so that we may reflect in our lives the love which we celebrate on this beautiful Sunday.

With my prayers and every good wish for you and your families for a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year,

+ **Malcolm**

Most Rev Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop of Liverpool



PARISH NEWS

Crib Offerings

This year's Crib Offerings will be for Christian children in need living in and around Bethlehem and Gaza.

Altar Servers

Altar Servers are invited to renew their commitment at Mass today – the nearest Sunday to the Feast of St Stephen, the patron saint of altar servers. New servers will be enrolled into the Guild of St Stephen.

200 Club

St Ambrose Barlow 200 Club is to start again soon. Steve Cooper will be collecting names this weekend. As usual the 200 Club costs £20 payable in one go, or four payments of £5, or £1 per week. For your money you will be entered into a monthly draw for £100 and £50 - January to April. Then at a free night out in the Parish Hall in April, you could win the £1000 jackpot. See Steve to join or give him a call on 01942 876487.

Save your Stamps

Please save the stamps from any Christmas Cards you may receive and hand them in at St Ambrose Barlow to Mary Barton who will send them off in aid of various charities. Likewise if you have any old spectacles or any unwanted wool for knitting into woollen blanket squares for sending abroad.

Bring & Buy Bingo

The Bring & Buy Bingo scheduled for 7 January at St Ambrose Barlow has had to be postponed. New details to follow.

Burns Night

Friday 16th January at St Ambrose Barlow at 7.45 pm. Including supper and a "wee" dram - £6.50.



New Year's Eve Mass

If you would like to welcome in the New Year in church, there will be a Vigil Mass at 11.15 pm on New Year's Eve at Holy Family, followed by the chimes of Big Ben (live), a New Year Blessing, and a drink or two at the back of church.

New Year's Day Mass

The first day of the New Year is the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. There will be one Mass for the Parish of St Margaret Clitherow at 12.00 noon at Holy Family. All welcome.

Prayer for the New Year

Wherever you are on New Year's Eve, you might like to welcome in the New Year with this prayer:

**O God of new beginnings and wonderful surprises,
thank you for the gift of a new year.**

**May it be a time of grace for us,
a time to grow in faith and love,
a time to renew our commitment
to following your Son, Jesus.**

**May it be a year of blessing for us,
a time to cherish family and friends,
a time to renew our efforts at work,
a time to embrace our faith more fully.**

**Walk with us, please, in every day
and every hour of this new year,
that the light of Christ might shine through us,
in spite of our weaknesses and failings.**

**Above all, may we remember this year
that we are pilgrims on the sacred path to you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**



Full of cold, got the flu?

Please think before coming to church if you're full of cold or flu. If you come to church when you're full of cold, it's highly likely that others will catch your cold or flu. This can be very serious for those parishioners, for example, whose immune systems are low due to treatment for cancer. So, if you're not well, perhaps stay at home and watch Mass on the internet (www.churchservices.tv) or pray quietly in your own way. It's not a sin to miss Mass if you're not well.

LAST WEEK'S PARISH COLLECTIONS

*No figures to hand at the time of printing.
Totals will be included in next week's newsletter.*

SECOND COLLECTIONS

Today	No collection
Next Weekend	No collection

PARISH MASS TIMES & INTENTIONS

WEEK BEGINNING 28th December	HOLY FAMILY	ST AMBROSE BARLOW	ST GABRIEL'S	ST RICHARD'S
SUNDAY	9.00 am Kevin Freeman 11.00 am Patrick McCafferty	11.00 am Thomas Laing	(Sat) 6.00 pm Seamus McNulty	(Sat) 6.00 pm A Special Intention 9.30 am Keith Boulton 6.30 pm Bernadette Sproston
MONDAY	<i>9.00 am Mass at St Joseph's, Leigh</i>			
TUESDAY		9.15 am Barbara Johnston		9.15 am Ellen & Harry Robinson
WEDNESDAY	11.15 pm New Year's Eve Mass (George Baybut)			9.00 - 10.00 am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
THURSDAY <i>New Year Day</i>	12.00 noon New Year's Day Mass (Charles & Beatrice Gibbs)			<i>Mass at Holy Family</i>
FRIDAY	10.00 am Lois O'Neill			<i>Mass at Holy Family</i>
SATURDAY	10.00 am Martha Ryan		6.00 pm Thanksgiving for Suc- cessful Operation (AV)	6.00 pm Pat Shaw
SUNDAY	9.00 am Baby Uriel Magdamo 11.00 am Vernon Byrne	11.00 am Mykola & Kateryna Batrak		9.30 am Edna Bennett 6.30 pm Paul Reynolds

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

This Week

Saturday: 10.30 - 11.00 am at Holy Family
After 6.00 pm Mass at St Richard's
(or by appointment with one of the priests)

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEKEND

The Epiphany of the Lord



First Reading

The glory of the Lord shines out from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 60:1-6

Second Reading

The promises of Christ are given to all people who share in his gift of forgiveness and new life.

Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6

Gospel Reading

The three wise men find the infant Jesus in Bethlehem and acknowledge him as their King.

Matthew 2:1-12



If Jesus is to become the centre of our life,
we need to spend time in his presence,
before the Tabernacle.

Pope Francis

LET US HOLD IN PRAYER



Those who have died, especially:
Those we are remembering this Christmas

Those who are sick, especially:

Holy Family

Connie Crilly
Kathy Kenyon
Dorothy Hampson
Claire Barlow

Emma Oldham
Rev Jim Melia
Pat O'Neill

Sacred Heart & St Richard's

Fred Lyth
Agnes Pilkington
Shirley Leggett
Bessie Hulme
Enid Scott
Eileen Sherrington
Eugenie Cheetham

Margaret Hurley
Arthur Lucas
Phil Tomkins
Ronnie Scott
Thomas McLoughlin
Irene McIntyre

St Ambrose Barlow

Norah Atkinson
Margaret Ross

Alan West
Claire Barlow

St Gabriel's

Anne Broad

Pat Waring

*If you wish to add (or remove) someone from the prayer list,
please contact Fr Dave by phone or email.*