

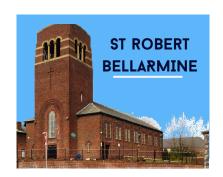
Parish of St Josephine Bakhita





PARISH PRIEST

Very Rev Canon Mark B Madden KCHS FRSA



Isaiah saw an Israel that no one else could see. Scripture scholars tell us that today's first reading was written when the Jewish people were permitted to return to Jerusalem after years in exile, but found that the city had been utterly destroyed. But Isaiah saw blooming flowers where his compatriots saw a barren desert. He saw God's glory and splendour, not the desecration of the temple. 'Courage!" Do not be afraid,' he urged his neighbours, for God would save them. There are times and will continue to be times when we will look at the world, or the country, or our community, and see much to be pessimistic or downright hopeless about. But with the eyes of a prophet, with the eyes of faith, we can envision 'the splendour of our God' emerging from the doom and gloom.

But it is not easy. Witness John the Baptist. What happened to the unborn child who leaped in the womb in Mary's presence when she herself was with child? What happened to his memory of the Holy Spirit coming down like a dove when he baptised Jesus? What happened to his certainty we saw last week when he announced that the kingdom was at hand? Perhaps the four walls of Herod's prison acted like a barrier to his deeper vision. Or perhaps he questioned why a Messiah who healed the blind and deaf and even raised the dead failed to free the imprisoned. What happened to proclaiming liberty to captives? Had God abandoned him? Have we not wondered the same ourselves?

When James refers to 'the Lord's coming' in the second reading, he is speaking of Jesus' Second Coming, but it can be applied to the Lord's presence at any time. If he is really at hand, how are we not seeing it? How are we not feeling it? Be patient, James tells us. In today's world, where communication, information, and entertainment are immediately available any time, it takes patience and thoughtful consideration to recognise the Lord. In the busyness of these weeks before Christmas, let us take the time to ponder and discern the Lord's presence in our lives.

Fr Mark

PLEASE OFFER YOUR PRAYERS FOR THOSE PARISHIONERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY ILL



Joseph Mulhaney Michael Lundon Margaret Spencer Peter Gibbons Mary Spofforth

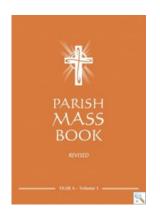
POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR DECEMBER



For Christians in areas of conflict

Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation, and hope.

Lord in your mercy...



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Readings for Mass today can be found on Page 88 of the Parish Mass Book

HOLY FAMILY MASS

Archbishop John will celebrate the 11:00 Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral on Sunday 28 December, the feast of the Holy Family. This will mark the closing of the Jubilee Year within the diocese. All are welcome.

ARCHBISHOP SHERRINGTON FOR CBCEW - Life Issues Statement

Bishops' Conference have released a statement concerning the dignity and protection of human life. You can read the statement and watch an interview with Archbishop Sherrington here: https://www.cbcew.org.uk/assisted-suicide-and-abortion-life-issues-statement/

Third Sunday of Advent

14 December 2025

Irenaeus and St Thomas' Oratory Gt George's Rd. Waterloo.

It's an outreach and Spirituality Centre which serves tea, coffee, toast and a pantry for people in need.

A few people live in cars. As we exist on donations please would you help us by placing tinned, packet food, sugar, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap etc in the box at the back of St Robert Bellarmine's church.



GAUDATE SUNDAY

"Rejoice in the Lord always; once more I tell you, rejoice!

As Christmas draws near, the Church emphasises the joy which should be in our hearts over all that the birth of our Saviour means for us. The great joy of Christians is to see the day drawing nigh when the Lord will come again in His glory to lead them into His kingdom. The often-repeated Veni ("Come") of Advent is an echo not only of the prophets but also of the conclusion of the Book of the Apocalypse: "Come, Lord Jesus," the very last words of the Bible.

Today is known as Gaudate Sunday. The term Gaudate refers to the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice".

Rose coloured vestments are worn to emphasise our joy that

Christmas is near and we also light the rose candle on our Advent wreath

Join the Metropolitan Cathedral this Advent and Christmas

We have a beautiful series of carol services and concerts throughout December, celebrating the hope and joy of the season.

Britten & Saint-Saëns - Sunday 14 December | 3pm Free admission

Festival Carol Service & La Nativité du Seigneur: Messiaen -Sunday 21 December | 5pm Free admission



LECTIO FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Every Friday at 6pm at St Vincent de Paul's Church, L1 5JN, there is a "lectio" prayer group for young adults. There will be a Mass at 6pm, followed by a short time of sharing the Sunday readings at 6.30pm.

It's a friendly group and sometimes they also organise trips and retreats. If you want more information please contact James: djmoroney@cantab.net or 07394 503 911

LOURDES YOUTH PILGRIMAGE 2026

Applications for the Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage with Sefton Coach 7 are LIVE now at liverpoollourdesyouth.co.uk. Young people aged from Year 10-age of 22 are invited to be part of Coach 7 this year (22nd-31st July 2026). The cost of the pilgrimage is £720 but fundraising will reduce this cost. For more information email coach7@rcaol.org.uk

BE A TRUST GOVERNOR:

Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Trust are looking for Governors to support leaders in providing the best Catholic education for pupils in our schools.

If you are interested in using your skills to benefit our pupils, please contact: governance@pfcmat.org or go to https://www.pfcmat.org/Governance/



CAFOD Christmas Fun Run - 27 December

Signup is open for CAFOD's annual Fun Run!
The run will take place on 27 December at Wavertree
Sports Park and is open to all.

Run, walk, or wheel with family and friends to share the joy of Christmas and raise money for those in need!

Scan the QR code on the poster to sign up, or search CAFOD Fun Run.



Run, walk or wheel with family and friends at:
Wavertree Sports Park,
Liverpool, L15 4LE
Share the joy of Christmas — run together with family and friends this feather season!
Adult £10 | Child £5 | Family £20
CAF®D needs all of vis



CHRISTMAS CARD APPEAL

The Archdiocese of Liverpool's Justice & Peace Commission is once again inviting parishes, schools, and individuals to take part in the Christmas Card Appeal for Christians in the Holy Land. This simple act of sending a card offers hope, solidarity, and a reminder that these communities are not forgotten.



Archbishop John Sherrington has warmly encouraged participation this year, noting that receiving a card can bring "hope and joy to a family, especially where the Christian community is small and fragile." Find out how to get involved: https://archdioceseofliverpool.org/4ou8m1g

In addition to the card appeal, this year's crib offerings in the Archdiocese of Liverpool will be securely passed on to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; a diocese of the Catholic Church whose territory includes Cyprus, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. This ensures your generosity directly supports Christians living in these areas.

Archdiocesan Young Adult Group Faith Based Talk: Is Scripture Outdated? December 16th 6:30PM - 8:00PM

Join the archdiocesan young adult group, as they are joined at Pauline Book Centre by Fr Hugh Donleavy for a faith based talk - Is Scripture outdated? Anyone between the ages of 18 and 35 are welcome to attend.

ENGLISH MARTYRS JOSPICE "200 CLUB" DECEMBER DRAW

1st	£20	No. 199	B Dunn
2nd	£15	No. 174	J Quinn
3rd	£10	No. 188	M Harwood
4th	£10	No. 83	L Smith



Many thanks for your continuous support. There are still spare numbers available for anyone wishing to join, £1 per month. Please contact Myra: 928 1136

ANOTHER HUGE THANK YOU!

Thank you again to everyone who joined us on Wednesday for the Christmas Bingo in English Martyrs hall.

Yet again it was a 'sell out'. We just about had enough chairs to seat everyone!

This is always a really popular fund raiser and this year we exceeded all previous years. We raised an amazing £1166 from the Bingo and English Martyrs raffle Thank you to everyone who made donations, bought raffle tickets or joined us on the night. It's always a fun few hours and a lovely community 'get together'

Thanks also to everyone who helped tirelessly behind the scenes to make it a success. These things only happen because we have a wonderful team of helpers.





PARISH BEREAVEMENT GROUP

In every parish family there are times when someone's world changes overnight through the loss of a loved one. In those moments, the simple presence of a compassionate fellow parishioner can make all the difference. Fr Mark would like to form a new Parish Bereavement Team—a small group of volunteers who can offer gentle support to grieving families through prayer, listening, and practical help around funerals.

You just need a caring heart, a willingness to listen, and a desire to bring Christ's comfort to those who mourn. A training course within the deanery will begin at the start of February for those interested.

If you feel you could offer a little time to this quiet but essential ministry, please contact the parish office. Together we can ensure that no member of our community walks through grief alone.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE

Are you planning to get married in a Catholic church? Are you looking for some time out from the busy wedding planning, providing you and your partner with an opportunity to focus on your relationship and to learn more about each other?

The Liverpool Archdiocese is now offering a marriage preparation course for engaged couples. The course will involve four sessions, meeting in group with other couples. To be led by trained lay facilitators, the course will help the couples develop skills which could facilitate good communication within their relationship and an understanding of unconditional love set within a Catholic faith.

The next course will be available in April 2026:

Date: 30 April, 7 May, 14 May, 21 May (all Thursdays)

Time: 6.30pm-8.30pm

Venue: St Agnes & St Aidan Church, Huyton, Liverpool, L36 5SQ

There is a fee of £50 per couple to help towards materials and other expenses. Please book online here at https://forms.office.com/e/hgy2JbUpy3?origin=lprLink For enquiries, please contact Moses Mui, Training Coordinator at m.mui@rcaol.org.uk

CATHOLIC PIC

The December edition is now available, free of charge. The main story this month features a report from Adoremus 2025, the day of prayer, reflection and celebration of the Eucharist.

Fr Mark has also written an article celebrating the 60th anniversary of Vatican II's document Nostra Aetate.

MARY'S MEALS - DOUBLE THE LOVE

Mary's Meals' Double the Love campaign is now running, which means that any donations made will be doubled by a group of generous supporters, up to £1.1million. You can give hope this Christmas to hungry children, with life changing school meals. Your gift will help Mary's Meals keep our promise into 2026 and beyond to the world's poorest communities in countries such as Ethiopia, Haiti and South Sudan, where conflict and the devastating impacts of climate change mean our nutritious meals are needed more than ever. There are many ways to get involved, find out more at https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/

Third Sunday of Advent

14 December 2025

MARRIAGE PREPARATION CATECHISTS NEEDED

Would you like to help engaged couples to prepare for marriage? The archdiocese is now recruiting catechists to join the marriage preparation team. The catechist training will be provided at St Monica's Church, Bootle, Liverpool, L20 9GA and consists of 5 sessions:

- · Monday 23 February 2026 (6.30pm 8pm)
- · Monday 2 March 2026 (6.30pm 8pm)
- · Monday 9 March 2026 (6.30pm 8pm)
- · Monday 16 March 2026 (6.30pm 8pm)
- · Saturday 28 March 2026 (10am 2pm)

Upon completion of training, the catechists will be asked to offer marriage preparation course for couples twice a year. If this is something you are interested in, please sign up here https://forms.office.com/e/JGbP8AtZwn?origin=lprLink For more information, please contact Moses at m.mui@rcaol.org.uk.

A FURTHER THANK YOU

Many thanks to all those who donated prizes and bought raffle tickets for St Robert's Christmas draw. £140.00 was raised for parish funds



CHRISTMAS CARDS AND GIFTS

Christmas stock is still available in English Martyrs Piety stall.

This year we have some wonderful olive wood and stained glass items which have come direct from the Holy Land.

Fr Mark's friend has an online shop and has provided a variety of items.

Proceeds from the sale of these go to support our friends in the Holy Land so please go in and have a browse.

St Robert's now have their Christmas cards and calendars available at the back of Church



LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY - SUNDAY MASS

Sunday Mass will has recommenced at Liverpool Hope University. Mass will take place at 5.30pm in the Chapel on Hope Park Campus each Sunday during term time. This Mass is in addition to the weekly 12.15pm Thursday lunchtime Mass.

All members of the university community are welcome to attend.

Contact Fr Peter Murphy (p.murphy@rcaol.org.uk) for more information.



COFFEE MORNING

Join us after mass at St Robert's on Sunday mornings for a cup of tea, coffee and a biscuit in the George Inch Hall. All are welcome.



ST ROBERT'S OVER 50's CLUB

The Over 50's Club meet in St Robert's parish centre on Thursday afternoons between 1.00 and 3.00pm. and is open to all.

Why not pop along and join in the fun - tea and coffee are available and, for a small charge, there is a raffle and a couple of games of Bingo for you to enjoy.

Regular members are asked to make a payment of £1.50 per week



STRUGGLING TO FIND A GIFT?

Why not send one of CAFOD's World Gifts?

Each gift is more than a present - it is a way to stand in solidarity with our global neighbours.

There are gifts of education, farming, water and many more. Have a browse of one of the catalogues at the back of both churches and then order online at cafod.org.uk/worldgifts. Your loved one will receive a card confirming the gift that has been purchased in their name.

WHAT'S ON AT JOSPICE

Virtual Christmas Tree:



If you could not join us for one of our services, you can make a dedication online and light up our virtual Christmas tree.

Our Online Dedication Page allows you to make a donation and leave a personal message of dedication. These messages can be shared with friends and family across the country — and even further afield — helping to spread support and encouragement far and wide.

Christmas Tree Collections

Our team of volunteers will be out collecting and recycling real Christmas trees in January 2026 - all your donations will help to fund hospice care for our patients.

From 16th January 2026, our team of volunteers will be collecting real Christmas trees from across Merseyside (postcode areas: L9, L10, L11, L20, L21, L22, L23, L30, L31, L37, L38).

This is a fundraising activity and all donations will go towards providing end of life hospice care for our patients in Thornton.

You can book your tree collection online at

https://register.enthuse.com/ps/event/ChristmasTreeCollectionandRecycling

For more information, or to volunteer, please contact <u>fundraising@stjhospice.org.uk</u> or call 0151 932 6044.

B&B STAYS AT CASTLERIGG MANOR

Castlerigg Manor is a Catholic retreat centre in the Lake District owned and operated by the Diocese of Lancaster. They work with more than 3,000 young people a year from around the north and beyond. When the building is empty, they offer B&B stays to individuals, families and small private groups and the money this raises supports their mission with young people.

Some B&B dates have opened up this January and February. Specifically, January 5-7th, February 9-11th, and February 16-18th. It's very affordable to book and a nice chance to spend a few days in the Lakes - head to https://castleriggmanor.com/staywith-us/

CHRISTMAS 2025

Times of Masses over the Christmas period:

Monday 22 December 10.00 Mass English Martyrs

Tuesday 23 December 10.00 Mass St Robert Bellarmine

Christmas Eve 6.00pm Christmas Vigil St Robert Bellarmine

Wednesday 24 December 9.00pm First Mass of Christmas English Martyrs

Christmas Day 9:30am Mass of Christmas Dawn English Martyrs

Thursday 25 December 11.00am Mass during the day St Robert Bellarmine

St Stephen's Day 12 Noon Mass St Robert Bellarmine

Friday 26 December

The Feast of the Holy Family
Sunday 28 December 9.30am Mass English Martyrs

11.00am Mass St Robert Bellarmine

The Feast of St Thomas Becket

Monday 29 December 12 Noon Mass English Martyrs

The 6th Day of Christmas

Tuesday 30 December 12 Noon Mass St Robert Bellarmine

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God

Thursday 1 January 2026 12 Noon Mass English Martyrs

No Mass on Friday 2nd January



Masses and Services for the coming week

DATE	English Martyrs	St Robert Bellarmine
Sunday 14th December	9.30am Kitty & Joe Maloney	11.00am People of the Parish
Sanctuary Lamp	Special intention (CS)	Jewell family
Monday 15th December	10.00am John Molloy	
Tuesday 16th December		10.00am Funeral Mass Rose Harwood
Wednesday 17th December	NO MASS	NO MASS
Thursday 18th December	10.00am Joe Lovelady & Septimus Murphy 1.00pm Funeral Service James Carney	
Friday 19th December		12.00pm Funeral Mass Marie Harrison
Saturday 20th December	NO MASS	NO MASS
Sunday 21st December	9.30am People of the Parish	11.00am Tommy Kelly

English Martyrs Office
School Lane, Litherland,L21 7LX
St Robert Bellarmine Office
Orrell Road, Bootle, L20 6DZ

O151 928 3471 englishmartyrs@rcaol.org.uk Office hours Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.30am - 2.30pm 0151 922 1352 strobert@rcaol.org.uk

Office hours Tues, Wed, Fri 9.30am - 1.30pm

Have others recognised Christ's presence in me? What can I do during Advent and Christmas to

witness to Christ's presence in the world?