



Parish of St Josephine Bakhita



ENGLISH MARTYRS



PARISH PRIEST

Very Rev Canon
Mark B Madden
KCHS FRSA

ST ROBERT BELLARMINE



The Fourth Sunday of Advent brings us very close to Christmas.

The waiting is almost over, but the mystery is not yet revealed. Today's Gospel does not rush us to the manger. Instead, it pauses with Joseph — a man facing confusion, disappointment, and uncertainty.

Joseph is a good man. He tries to do the right thing. And yet his plans have fallen apart. What he thought his life would be is no longer clear. Advent ends, not with certainty, but with questions. And it is there that God comes near.

God does not approach Joseph with explanations or proof. He comes in a dream, with a simple word: "Do not be afraid." God asks for trust before understanding. He invites Joseph to make room for what he cannot yet fully grasp.

The child is given two names. He will be called Jesus, the one who saves. And he will be called Emmanuel — God with us. Before the child is born, we are told who he is. God does not remain distant. He comes close.

As we stand on the edge of Christmas, our Gospel this Sunday shows us how God enters the world — quietly, gently, through ordinary faithfulness. Joseph says nothing, but he acts. He takes Mary into his home. He prepares to care for the child. God's nearness takes flesh in trust. In the days ahead, the Church will return again and again to this truth. Christmas is not about God arriving in power, but about God choosing closeness.

On this final Sunday of Advent, we are invited to do what Joseph did: to trust, to make room, and to believe that God is already nearer than we think. The waiting is almost over.

Fr Mark

Where might God be asking me, like Joseph, to trust without fully understanding?

PLEASE OFFER YOUR PRAYERS FOR THOSE PARISHIONERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY ILL



Joseph Mulhaney
Michael Lundon
Margaret Spencer
Peter Gibbons

Mary Spofforth

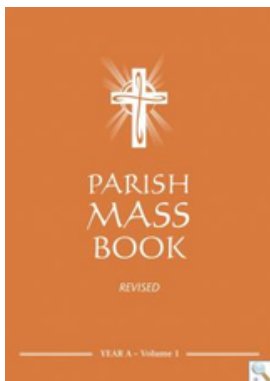
POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR DECEMBER



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...



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Readings for Mass today can be found on Page 90 of the Parish Mass Book

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS - LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC

The coach will leave from English Martyrs church at 6.30pm on Monday 22nd

PARISH OFFICES

Our three parish employees will be taking a well-earned rest over the Christmas season, and we thank them for their work throughout this year. The Parish Offices will close on Monday 22 December and will re-open on Monday 5 January. This will be the last Newsletter until Sunday 11 January. Mass intentions will be posted on the church notice boards.

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.

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/>



Pope Francis
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

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.



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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.

CRIB COLLECTIONS 2025

Our church cribs are almost complete, with Fr Mark placing the Christ-Child into them on Christmas Eve. It is traditional to make a donation when visiting over the coming season. Archbishop John has decided to donate all crib collections to the Catholic community living in the Holy Land. Please don't forget them in your prayers and support them as much as you can.



The cribs will remain in church until 2nd February - the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE MASS

Archbishop John will celebrate the Marriage and Family Life Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King on Sunday 8th February 2026 at 11:00. The Mass will include the renewal of marriage vows and a special blessing for those celebrating significant anniversaries. Refreshments will be served afterwards in the Gibberd Room. For those couples who are celebrating a significant wedding anniversary, please register online for a certificate which will be collected on the day. For more information, please contact Moses at: m.mui@rcaol.org.uk

The O Antiphons: Seven Steps Toward Christmas

Every year, from 17th December, the Church enters a beautiful and ancient rhythm of prayer known as the O Antiphons. These seven short verses, sung or spoken before the Magnificat at Evening Prayer, form a kind of countdown to Christmas—seven steps that draw us closer to the mystery of Christ’s birth.

Each antiphon begins with a title for the Messiah taken from the Old Testament: O Wisdom... O Adonai... O Root of Jesse... O Key of David... O Rising Sun... O King of the Nations... O Emmanuel.

Together they form a rich tapestry of hope, expressing the longing of God’s people through the centuries. They are ancient prayers, yet they speak deeply to the human heart today.

What makes the O Antiphons so striking is how honestly they name both our longing and God’s response. Each one begins with an “O!”—the cry of a heart reaching out. Then comes a vivid image of who God is for us: Wisdom when we feel confused; the Key of David when doors seem closed; the Rising Sun when life feels shadowed.

In a season often filled with noise and hurry, the O Antiphons invite us to slow down and listen. They remind us that Advent is not simply about preparing for a date on the calendar—it is about preparing a place in the heart. These prayers help us notice what we most deeply desire: guidance, freedom, light, peace, nearness to God.

And beautifully, when you take the first letters of the seven titles in Latin—from Emmanuel (23rd) back to Sapientia (17th)—they form the acrostic **ERO CRAS**: which means “**I will be there tomorrow.**”

It is Christ’s gentle promise to us as Christmas draws near. May praying or simply pondering the O Antiphons help us walk these final days of Advent with deeper stillness, hope, and joyful expectation.

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

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/hgy2JbUp3?origin=lprLink> For enquiries, please contact Moses Mui, Training Coordinator at m.mui@rcaol.org.uk

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.

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/>

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.

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.

THERE WILL BE NO COFFEE MORNING ON 28 DECEMBER



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 also have their Christmas cards and calendars available at the back of Church



DAY OF PRAYER FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Church pauses with Mary and Joseph as they wait for the birth of Jesus. It is a day that speaks of nearness, trust, and new life. For this reason, we remember in a special way all women who are expecting a child, and all families preparing to welcome new life.

We invite expectant mothers to hold their pregnancies in prayer today, asking God for protection, peace, and hope in the weeks ahead.

Loving God, you chose to come close to us by taking life in the womb of Mary. As she waited in trust and hope, be near to all expectant mothers today.

Give them peace when they feel anxious, strength when they feel tired, and reassurance when the future feels uncertain.

Bless the children growing within them. Guard their lives with your gentle care. Surround them with love, safety, and protection.

Be close also to families who wait and wonder, to those filled with joy, and to those who carry fear or past loss.

May your presence be their comfort. May your Spirit be their guide. And may the nearness of Emmanuel, God-with-us, bring them hope and confidence each day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen,

CAROL SERVICE

There will be a Carol Service at St Robert's at 5.30pm on Christmas Eve before the Mass at 6pm

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 fundraising@stjhospice.org.uk 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/stay-with-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 11.00am Mass	English Martyrs 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 week commencing 28th December

DATE	English Martyrs	St Robert Bellarmine
Sunday 28th December Sanctuary Lamp	9.30am Tony Coady Frances & John Laffey	11.00am People of the Parish Sheila Morley
Monday 29th December	12.00pm Elizabeth & Frank Morgan	
Tuesday 30th December		12.00pm Nora Houlton
Wednesday 31st December	NO MASS	NO MASS
Thursday 1st January	12.00pm Paul Devine	
Friday 2nd January	NO MASS	NO MASS
Saturday 3rd January	NO MASS	NO MASS
Sunday 4th January	9.30am People of the Parish	11.00am Jody Pennington

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

0151 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

Where might God be asking me, like Joseph, to trust without fully understanding?

Masses and Services for the coming week

DATE	English Martyrs	St Robert Bellarmine
Sunday 21st December Sanctuary Lamp	9.30am People of the Parish Nickson family	11.00am Tommy Kelly John, Lawrence & David Breen
Monday 22nd December	10.00am Suzanne McQuade 1.00pm Funeral service Anthony Boyle	
Tuesday 23rd December		10.00am Roy Boyle
Wednesday 24th December	9.00pm Perpetual Mass List	6.00pm Margaret, Gerard & Albert Price
Thursday 25th December	9.30am People of the Parish	11.00am People of the Parish
Friday 26th December		12.00pm Sandra Doyle
Saturday 27th December	NO MASS	NO MASS
Sunday 28th December	9.30am Tony Coady	11.00am People of the Parish

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