



Advent Pastoral Letter
Prayer Comes First

3rd December 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I know some of you were present in Cardiff the day the Pope - now recognised as one of the great Saints of our time - declared: *“As long as the memory of this visit lasts, may it be recorded that I, John Paul II, came to Britain to call you to Christ, and invite you to pray!”*ⁱ. They were striking words to the young people of our land, and they echo today as Advent begins with the Gospel’s urgent call: *“Stay awake!”*ⁱⁱ. At the first Christmas, the slumbering world was oblivious to the greatest Gift, as poor shepherds alone found the Saviour born for us ⁱⁱⁱ. Advent and Christmas call us once more to wake up to the *“grace and truth (which) came through Jesus Christ”*^{iv}. In a similar way, Pope Francis invites us to dedicate the year ahead to rediscovering in all our lives, the place of prayer in anticipation of the graces God wishes to give the Church and the world in the Jubilee Year 2025.

Prayer is always simple, and we shouldn’t make it complicated. It is our readiness to speak with God and be silent and attentive in His Presence. Prayer should really be as natural to us as breathing. It may be simple, yet prayer is also difficult. The Catechism reminds us, prayer involves a battle for us to remain silent and attentive, a moment of truth for our hearts, revealing where our real love is placed v.

The best advice in beginning to pray is simply to begin praying! Many are the paths and the aids which will help us enter into prayer, such as the reading of the Scriptures, or the taking up of the Rosary, or being silent before the Blessed Sacrament. Yet, prayer is not a technique, still less is it an achievement by a feat of concentration; it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts even when you and I meet with dryness and distraction. Saint Teresa of Avila teaches that our part in prayer is to be ready, to dispose ourselves to all the Lord wishes to give. Saint Teresa compared our task in prayer to preparing the ground, making ourselves ready as the farmer prepares the earth. The greatest temptation is to believe we have no time to pray, or that giving time to prayer conflicts with the duties and demands which fill our waking hours. The first step in rediscovering prayer may be to make time to pray.

I am writing these words to you during the twice-yearly meeting of the Bishops of England and Wales. Each of the long days of meetings filled with many questions and challenges, begins with the bishops gathering in silence, the silence of prolonged prayer before the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. At a recent meeting in Rome, Pope Francis gave this beautiful explanation as to why prayer must come first: *“In every diocese, in every parish, in every community, let us adore the Lord! Only in this way will we turn to Jesus and not to ourselves. For only through silent adoration will the Word of God live in our words; only in his presence will we be purified, transformed and renewed by the fire of his Spirit. Brothers and sisters, let us adore the Lord Jesus!”*^{vi}.

To face the questions and challenges of our own lives, do we give time to prayer by turning to the Lord Jesus in the silence of our hearts? Do we prepare to receive the supreme Gift of the Eucharist in the silence of adoration? Is our conversation and attention given to the Lord or to the confusing voices around us? The hope of Advent will be found amid life’s challenges and the lengthening shadows of our world insofar as we are each ready to open our hearts in prayer *“to receive the outpouring of God’s grace”*^{vii}. May Our Lady help us be so awake in giving time more generously to daily prayer and to adoration of the Lord Jesus in every tabernacle of the Diocese ^{viii}. In the words of the Christmas carol we will sing *“O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord”*^{ix}.

United with you in this prayer and adoration,
+Mark
Bishop of Shrewsbury

ⁱ Pope John Paul II, Ninian Park, 2nd June 1982

ⁱⁱ Mk. 13:37

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Lk2: 11

^{iv} Jn. 1:17

^v Cf. CCC No. 2732

^{vi} Pope Francis Conclusion of General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 29th October 2023

^{vii} Cf. Letter of Pope Francis for the Holy Year 2025

^{viii} Cf. Mt. 2: 11

^{ix} Adeste Fideles

Newsletter for the Parishes of

Our Lady and the Apostles, St. Ambrose and St. Vincent de Paul

Telephone: 0161 480 2489 Email: stockport3parishes@gmail.com

Websites: ourladyandtheapostles.co.uk/ stambrosechurch.org.uk/ stvincentbramhall.org/

Parish Priest: **Fr. Martin Onuoha** Email: frifeanyimom@yahoo.com

Assistant Priest: **Fr. Moses Ibeh**

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, 3rd December 2023

You can join us via this Live Stream link: <https://www.churchservices.tv/ourladystockport> (for Our Lady’s church)

OR click on tinyurl.com/stockportparishes or [Stockport Parishes - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) (for both St. Vincent’s and St. Ambrose’)



Date	Feast	Time	Church	Mass Intention
Sunday 3rd December	THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT <i>Day of Special Prayer for all Migrants and Refugees</i>	6.30pm	Vigil Mass Our Lady’s	Tomasz Mamakki <i>Confessions before and during Mass</i>
		9.45am	St Vincent’s	Margaret Conway (Spec Int)
		10am	St Ambrose	End of All Wars and World Peace
		11.am	Our Lady’s	Andrew Callaghan (Ann) <i>Confessions before and during Mass</i>
		1pm	Our Lady’s	Igbo Mass - Thanksgiving
Monday 4th December	Ferial	9.30am	St. Ambrose	Paula and Agnes Kiely RIP
Tuesday 5th December	Ferial	9.30am	Our Lady’s	Liam Gibbons, Ann
Wednesday 6th December	Ferial	9:30am	St Vincent’s	John & Marie McDonald Ann <i>Confessions before Mass</i>
		12.15p m	Aquinas College	Mass preceded by Adoration
Thursday 7th December	St Ambrose B. D.	9.30am	St Ambrose	Ceris Jones (Private Int.) <i>Confessions before Mass</i>
		7pm	Our Lady’s	Fr. Pat Monroe
Friday 8th December	The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Solemnity	9.30am	St Vincent’s	Damian Norton, B’day
Saturday 9th December	Ferial	9.30am	Our Lady’s	Ceris Jones, (Private Int.)
		6.30pm	Vigil Mass Our Lady’s	Una, Melissa, Martin & Mary and Relatives (Thanksgiving) <i>Confessions before and during Mass</i>
Sunday 10th December	Second Sunday of Advent Bible Sunday	9.30am	St Vincent’s	Mary Norton, Spec Int
		10am	St Ambrose	Our Parish Family
		11 am	Our Lady’s	End of All Wars and World Peace <i>Confessions before and during Mass</i>

There is **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** before every weekday morning Mass from 8:30am—0930hrs.

The **Sacrament of Reconciliation** is available after 9.30am Mass on Saturday morning and by appointment.

Please pray for those preparing to receive the sacraments

Baptisms: New Baptism classes will start in 2024. **First Holy Communion:** next date to be announced.

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults): Are you or anyone you know interested in joining the Catholic Church or wish to know more about the Catholic faith? Please join us after the 11am Mass every Sunday at Our Lady’s.

CONFIRMATION: 7PM, 16th May 2024 at Our Lady’s.

SAFEGUARDING LEADS FOR THE THREE PARISHES :- St Vincent’s-Judy Carey carey.judith@yahoo.com OLATA Ged Murtagh -geraldmurtagh@outlook.com St Ambrose—Karen Tatton thetattons@ntlworld.com

Sick List

IN ST. VINCENT'S: We remember in our prayers all the intentions on the St. Vincent's Prayer Board. Please add your intentions to the Prayer Board in church and you can see who is in need of our prayers on our website under "Thoughts for the week".

IN OUR LADY'S: Mary Metcalfe, Taya, Angela Mullin, Hayden Longworth, Peter Stanway, Julie Scanlan, McKenzie Kiely, Pauline Hinson, Eileen McGahan, Veronica Morrisey, Barbara Murphy, Michelle Philips, Maureen Brosnahan, Kelly Brosnahan, Zach Tierney, Irene Cox, Lee Abernathy, Janice Cook, Annie Topping, Theresa Burrows, Josephine O'Hagan, Denise Corlet, Nora Reade, Marie Kenefick, Beryl Collins, Josie Vaughan, Honora Hague, Victoria Russell, Sophie Mansfield, Vivienne Goostry, John Wynne, Vincent Tracey, Veronica Gallagher, Aine O'Callaghan, Mary Murphy, Jordan Harris, Alana Walsh, Jean Egginton, Mary Glindon, Jane Coupes, Michael Philbin, Matthew Donegani.

IN ST. AMBROSE'S: Matthew Donegani, Michael Nealon, Colin Burns, Cerys Jones, Richard Laurens, June Campbell, Mavis Doggett, Khia Whitehead, Eleanor Loftus, Mary Andrusiak, Mary Sein, Paul Thuoc, Andrew Way, Mary Young, Veronica Norbury, Imelda Judge, Veronica Lane, Joanna Winter, Paul McClure, Helen Jenkins, Helen Leasor, Terry Glynn, Leaf Matthieson.

RECENTLY DEPARTED: May the souls of, Susan Margaret Mills, Mary Ryan, Veronica Rendell, Margaret Pendlebury, George Bockenheim, Fr Liam Tallon, Calista Ogwuegbo, Graham Cash, Maria Harding, Kathleen Bond, Julie Whittam, Canon Ted Harrington, Peter Ward, Carl Stanley, Eddy Saunders, Margaret Anne Kenny, Brian Lane, Chris Donovan, Patrick Moore, Deacon Tom Coyle, Marie Walker, Kate Chalmers and all the souls of all our recently departed rest in peace.

ANNIVERSARIES: Joan Kelly, Bill Matthews, Paula Kiely, Allan Jenkinson, John Shields, Ethel Maguire, Katie Collier, David Williams, Mary Ann Carroll, William Hope, Carole Ann Armes, Brenda Brett, Hilda Satterthwaite, Andrew Callaghan, Arthur Bailey, Teresa Greenwood, Brenda Collier, Leslie Whelan, Raymond (Ray) McNulty, Clive Parsons, Dominic Fitzmaurice, Joan Matthews

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2023

<u>Christmas Eve - Sunday 24th Dec</u>	4.00pm	St. Ambrose Children's Mass
	4.30pm	St. Vincent's Children's Mass
	5pm (4.45 pm Carols)	Our Lady's, Children's Mass
	Midnight Mass (11.45 pm Carols)	Our Lady's
<u>Christmas Day—Monday 25th Dec</u>	9.00 am	Our Lady's
	9.30am (9.15am Carols)	St. Vincent's
	10.00 am (9.45am Carols)	St. Ambrose
	11am (10.45am Carols)	Our Lady's



3 NEW RCIA CANDIDATES:- have been welcomed to Our Lady's. We look forward to having them with us at the 11am Mass every Sunday at Our Lady's. Any new candidates considering joining or knowing more about the Catholic Church are still welcome to join the sessions.

OUR LADY'S CHRISTMAS CRIB will be up from the last week of Advent—Please plan to spend some time with the Lord after each Mass.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FAMILY OF CHRISTINE O'GARA - Christine O'Gara (born 1937) died on 10th November. A Requiem Mass for Christine will be held at 10am on 4th December at St Ann's church for those who would like to say their final goodbye. The funeral Mass will also be livestreamed.

HARRYTOWN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL JOB VACANCIES - Harrytown Catholic High School currently has vacancies for a Pastoral Manager and a Lay Chaplain. Please see the school website – www.harrytownschool.org The closing date for both is Monday 11 December at 9am

THANK YOU all who attended the Film & Supper night. It was a great event and raised £522.80 for the Medical Outreach Mission.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION CANDIDATES

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION 2024 - First Holy Communion candidates will join the Children's Liturgy as part of their preparation; classes will begin on Sunday 7th January. Please email names to the parish office.

CONFIRMATIONS 2024 - will take place on **16th May 2024 at 7pm at Our Lady's** for the four parishes of Our Lady and the Apostles, St Ambrose, St Vincent's and St Joseph's. Please contact the parish office if you would like to register your child.

OLATA CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP - After the 7pm Mass every Thursday.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION AND MORNING PRAYER OF THE CHURCH are held before every morning Mass in our three parishes. Please join us.

CARITAS AT CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2023 - Thanks to your support last year for the Caritas Appeal, Diocese of Shrewsbury have been able to respond and provide vital support for people and families in the most vulnerable situations. As we now enter another winter with its uncertainties, Caritas is again at the forefront of the Diocesan social action response. 100% of your donations will go to those in the most vulnerable situations within the diocese ensuring they receive crisis food vouchers and practical support as quickly as possible when it is most needed. Please see the poster at the back of Church with a QR code for donations. You can also donate online at www.caritasshrewsbury.org.uk If you aware of someone in need of assistance, please speak to Trish Spencer, at Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury, 0151 652 1281.

FOREIGN CURRENCY— Please put spare notes or coins to the big jars in all 3 churches for SVP charitable projects.

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD - from this Sunday onwards, the Precious Blood will be distributed from the chalice at all Masses.

BISHOP MARK'S PASTORAL LETTER - The Bishop's pastoral letter for Advent will be read during at Mass this weekend.

RECOMMISSIONING OF EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS - will take place at all Sunday Masses this weekend, Sunday 3rd December.

ST AMBROSE ARE HOSTING PARISH FEAST DAY / PRE CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER ON 10.12.23 - for all parishioners of our 3 parishes, after the **10am Sunday mass** at St Ambrose' Church. It is an opportunity for us all to celebrate the season & wish each other well. There will be Tea, Coffee, Cake, Soft drinks for children, and that all important Tombola. Please save the date and raid your cupboards for Tombola items. A great opportunity to make space for this years Christmas presents.

SUNDAY MASS TIMES - St Vincent's—9.30am, St Ambrose—10.00 am, Our Lady's—Saturday 6.30pm & Sunday 11.00 am.

CHRISTMAS WELCOME TEAM. A rota is being drawn up to ensure we have enough people to welcome our congregations during the busy Christmas period. The main task is to greet people as they arrive. Can you help? Please sign up at the back of church this weekend. Thank you.

RECONCILIATION DURING ADVENT—In addition to Saturdays, after the 9.30am Mass at Our Lady's, Confessions will be available before and during the Saturday 6.30pm Vigil Mass and Sunday 11am Mass at Our Lady's. Confessions will also be available on Wednesday at St Vincent's and on Thursday at St Ambrose. Please make the most of these opportunities to prepare for the Holy Season of the celebration of Our Lord's nativity.

OUR LADY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL CAROL CONCERT - 2pm on 12th December at Our Lady's church. All are welcome! Please come along to join in and support the children at this joyful event.

COMMISSION TO THE GOFUNDME PAGE - Some have enquired whether a percentage of their donation goes to the company as commission. So far, the organiser, Max Eden, has paid all commissions, as his own personal contribution to the medical outreach, and so, every donation has gone to the outreach mission. We are most grateful to Max and to all the generous donors. For more details or to support, please click on this link <https://gofund.me/2890550e> or scan the QR code,



or feel free to give in any other convenient way.

EASYFUNDRAISING—FR MARTIN'S FREE MEDICAL OUTREACH MISSION 2024 — Thanks to those that have signed up for Easyfundraising. For shopping at Amazon, access Amazon via the Easyfundraising website otherwise you won't get the donation. If you want to support this cause through your online shopping, at no extra cost to yourself at all, please copy and paste the following link https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause/step-1/?char=303700&invite=97jv2j&referral-campaign=c2s&utm_campaign=refCROtest and sign up to easy fundraising. If the online shop you are purchasing from is signed up to Easyfundraising, a small little pop up will appear at the right side of the screen, you click accept donation. If you do purchase from the site a small percentage of what you purchase will be added to the Medical Outreach Mission at no cost to yourself. If you do not purchase, no money will be taken from your account. The shop does not add anything onto the cost of your shopping for this. See if you can sign up before you do your Christmas Shopping. Any questions speak to Lucy.

OUR LADY'S NEWS

CHILDREN'S LITURGY - every Sunday in the guild room.

TEA AND COFFEE AFTER 11AM MASS at Our Lady's in the guild room this Sunday.

THE PIETY STALL - at the back of church has cards for every occasion including Mass cards and Christmas cards. Also gifts, rosary beads and children's Mass books. Open after Mass on Tuesday morning, and before and after Mass on Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

DONA ONLINE DONATION STAND - Feel free to give it a try or continue to use the QR code, or the weekly envelopes & standing order.

ST AMBROSE NEWS

SUNDAY MASSES—10AM from 3rd December

FEAST DAY, CAKE DONATIONS—Any boxed (in date) cakes for the Feast Day bash on 10th December can now be handed in at church. Any budding Mary Berys who would like to bake a cake or buns are invited to display their talents! The church will be open the day before to accept offerings. Thank you!

PIETY STALL - Many thanks to everyone who continues to support the piety stall at the back of church. There are many lovely cards, books, gifts and rosary beads.

WEEKDAY MASS - Weekday Masses will now be in the sacristy, in order to reduce the heating costs.

TOMBOLA - Please put tombola donations in the container at the back of church. Donations can be left at all churches. Thank you!

ST VINCENT'S NEWS

MONDAY 4TH - 10am Service of Word and Communion followed by Advent Prayer Group-all welcome.

NEXT SUNDAY 10TH TOY MASS - please bring a new toy/gift wrapped and labelled with suggested age/sex for recipient and Caritas will distribute them to the needy in the Diocese.

TRAVELLING NATIVITY figures will start their journey around the parish, please add your name to the list. Donations for Christmas flowers gratefully accepted.

AT THE START OF THE NEW CHURCH YEAR, we take the prayer intentions from the Prayer Board. Please rewrite your intentions if the recipient still needs our prayers.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRAMHALL AND WOODFORD are manning a stall at the first Woodford Winterfest near the Aviator pub on Thurs 7th December. Come and join in the carols from 5.30-7pm

TO DONATE TO ST VINCENT'S PARISH—please scan the QR code



Please send any items for inclusion in the newsletter to the Parish Office by 12 midday on Thursday. Kindly indicate parish of choice for your mass intentions. Bear in mind that dates might not be available.

Our Lady and the Apostles, Shaw Heath, Stockport SK3 8BQ; St. Ambrose, Adswold Road, Stockport, SK3 3QA; St. Vincent de Paul, 29 Handley Road, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 3EX.

The Diocese of Shrewsbury is a Registered Charity 234025 [Data Protection Privacy Notice](#). The parish of Our Lady and the Apostles sometimes collects personal information about parishioners. All personal information is collected, processed and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. This is retained only as necessary and used by the Parish/Diocese for the benefit of the Parish and for legitimate reasons such as administrative and religious