

SHINE



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**Curious about the Christian faith, and wondering where to start? Or wanting to go deeper or reconnect with your faith? Then watch out for Alpha...
Coming soon in 2025.**

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mckay7897@hotmail.com for
more information.**

**You're invited
#TryAlpha**

Alpha



Hello all,

As we look back over this year we see what a busy year it has been in this our Centenary Year. We had a wonderful celebration on 29 June when were joined by the bishop, former clergy of the parish and a full church of people; even the weather was kind.

Apart from that, the usual round continued of baptisms, funerals, first Sacraments and Confirmations and only a few weddings. The bishop is due back at the end of November for a visitation of the parish and he will see what a lot is going on. I have had to send in a report on the state of the parish and I am sure he will soon get a flavour of how much is going on and how welcoming we are to everybody who comes to visit.

Next year the whole Church will be celebrating a Holy Year – Pilgrims of Hope. You will find an introduction to it in this issue of Shine. I hope we will be able to join in some of the celebrations that are planned and especially the “24 Hours for the Lord” which is planned for Friday, 28 March and will run from midday Mass that day until midday Mass the following day.

On a personal note, I will be celebrating fifty years since my ordination to the priesthood. This took place on 19 July 1975 in Our Lady and the Apostles, Shaw Heath which was where I was baptised, made my First Communion and Confirmation as well as the place where my parents were married. After my Jubilee I shall be retiring from parish ministry and giving someone else the opportunity to be parish priest here in St Peter's. I hope to continue living in the Stockport area where all the family are situated and help out in local parishes as and when required. Before then there will be plenty to do here.

Thank you to you all and I hope that you have a good and peaceful Christmas.

Fr Peter

News from the parish communities of
St Peter's, Hazel Grove and
St Philip's, Offerton.

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Who's who in St Peter's

Where we are . . .

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Our joint website is www.stpeterscatholic.church

Shining a light on our parish communities

Mission Sunday

20 October was named Mission Sunday by Pope Francis – a day when the Catholics around the world would pray for the varied and valuable work carried out by a number of missionary organisations in the Lord's name.

At St Peter's, while we do have appeals from various mission organisations, the main support for this work is carried out in the parish by the Missio Red Box collectors. It was decided that in our parish a Holy Hour and a recitation of the rosary, dedicated to the work of the missions and missionaries, would be held.

The Holy Hour was held at 4pm, led by Deacon John before being taken over by a number of Red Box collectors. After a short introduction, each of the Glorious decades was recited in turn, together with a relevant passage from scripture and some thoughts on their relevance in the world today. This was followed by a period of time for personal reflection and prayer, before moving on to the next decade.

In this way the hour soon passed. (It was completely different to early memories of kneeling on a stone floor with cousins at my Auntie Kathleen's farmhouse while praying the rosary at great speed!) A photograph of some of the collaborators can be seen here, but there were a number of other parishioners in attendance



together with the two diocesan organisers of mission support work.

By coincidence, the parish had had its annual Missio Mill Hill Missionaries appeal the previous Sunday, when we were not looking for money (directly!) but for people to keep a Red Box in their home and for collectors to empty them on quarterly basis. Payment can also be made by direct debit. Further box holders and collectors are always welcome; please contact the parish office for further details.

Sharing their Confirmation joy

Isabela (Bela) McGahan

The preparation for our Confirmation took around six months. During these months we learnt about various things such as stewardship and how we are the branches of God. We also took a day out to Savio House where we learnt about Blessed Carlo Acutis and received the sacrament of confession.

The Confirmation in itself was truly a beautiful experience. I can remember coming home and my mouth feeling sore because I had been smiling all evening. The power and love of God will never be able to be fully expressed in words but the feeling doesn't need an explanation – it's that amazing. That night in the church you could truly feel God's love and the love of our family and friends surrounding us all in a mesmerising way.

That is a feeling I will never forget, the Holy Spirit shining bright within us. I am extraordinarily grateful for this experience that St Peter's provided for the youth on the night of our Confirmation – and of course we mustn't forget, the buffet afterwards was amazing! Thank you to Bishop Mark, Fr Peter, Deacon John and all who participated in our journey to be confirmed; we are so grateful.



Noah Morgan

I really enjoyed my Confirmation journey with St Peter's. I got to spend fun times with friends and making new memories on this faith journey together. The best bit of our journey was the day trip to Savio House.



Read more about Confirmation and SPY (St Peter's Youth) on page 36

Farewells and welcomes

Since our last issue, the following people known in our community have gone to their rest:

Michael John Melia
Matthew Bardsley
Rosemary Negus
John Mercer
Marcus Park
Margaret and David Harding
Martin Lally
Maureen Howarth
Patrick (Paddy) Campbell
Kay Glazier
Kathleen Mary Thiele
Pauline Farrow
James (Jimmy) Vernon
Bridget Elizabeth (Bridie) Burgess
Patrick Joseph Jeffries
Stephen Stott
Frederick James Waldron
Joyce Philomena Brennan
Jean Winifred Hooper
Dan O'Connell
Peter Cafferty
Denise D'Ambra

Margaret Brady
John Cusack
Dorothy Ramsay
Sheila Grocott
Brian Richard Truman
Veronica (Vera) Atherton
Ian Drury
Graham Kingsford
Bernadette Shanahan
William Griffiths
Cyril Atherton
Bernadette Grimsley
Honorina Culshaw
Nirmala (Nimi) Netto

and the following have been baptised:

Claudia Royle
Lucas Britland
George Morgans
Florence Kidman
Elodie Bradshaw

Finley Ashworth
Fabio Bennardo
Anwen Tickner
Leo Osborne
Roman Bramhall
Ava Gibson
Lola Faith Moore Gould
Cohen Gallogly
Sophie Johnson
Violet Harrop
Annika Ajo
Aidan Tobin
Iris Anthony
Leo Carvil
Grace Elliott
Freddie Livingstone
Thea McCumeskey
Rhian Gita
Jack Kinsey
Ziggy Lynch-King
Sidney Rose
Isabella Rose

Celebrating 70 years

Mary Rita and Egbert Francis Lebon were married at St Joseph's cathedral, Dar es Salaam in Tanzania on 26 June 1954. This year, on Saturday, 29 June, they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary (a platinum anniversary), with a church blessing from Fr Peter, who presented them with a papal blessing from the Holy Father, Pope Francis. The happy couple also received a card from King Charles III.





Pastoral visit of His Beatitude Major Archbishop Mar. Raphael Thattil and the declaration of a Mission

Syro-Malabar Church

The Syro-Malabar Church is an Apostolic Church which traces its origin to St Thomas, the Apostle, who landed at Cranganore (Muziris) in 52 AD and founded seven Christian communities in Kerala. St Thomas was martyred in 72 AD at Mylapore, near Chennai. The early Christian community in India was known as St Thomas Christians. They were also called 'Nazranis', meaning those who follow the path of Jesus of Nazareth.

Catholic Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain

On 28 July 2016, our Holy Father Pope Francis established the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain (for England, Scotland and Wales), with its See in Preston at St Alphonsa cathedral (formerly St Ignatius church, Preston).

There are five parishes, 70 missions and 24 proposed missions for the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain to serve nearly 80,000 Syro-Malabar Catholics in Great Britain. Currently, 72 priests are working for the community in England, Wales and Scotland.

Syro-Malabar community in Stockport

The Syro-Malabar community at Stockport started to celebrate Holy Mass on 25 December 2006 at St Peter's church.

On Thursday 26th September 2024, His Beatitude Mar. Raphael Thattil Major Archbishop, the Head and Father of the Syro-Malabar Church, and His Excellency Mar. Joseph Srampickal, Bishop of Eparchy of Great Britain, visited the Syro-Malabar community at Stockport and declared a St Sebastian mission.

The Syro-Malabar community in Stockport and our Mission Director Rev Fr Jose Kunnumpuram are sincerely grateful to Bishop Mark Davies, VG Rev Fr Michael Gannon, Rev Fr Peter Sharrocks, Deacon John and to the entire St Peter's parish community for their continued prayers and support.





2025 – a Jubilee Year



The Holy Father will open the Holy Door at St Peter's (in Rome!) on Christmas Eve

Fr Peter explains

The Holy Father has announced that 2025 will be a Jubilee Year, something which happens every 25 years. The theme for Jubilee 2025 is "Pilgrims of Hope," and it will be a year of hope for a world suffering the impacts of war, the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis.

"Jubilee" is the name given to a particular year; the name comes from the instrument used to mark its launch. In this case, the instrument in question is the yobel, the ram's horn, used to proclaim the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This (Jewish) holiday occurs every year, but it takes on special significance when it marks the beginning of a Jubilee year. We can find an early indication of it in the Bible: a Jubilee year was to be marked every 50 years, since this would be an 'extra' year, one which would happen every seven weeks of seven years, ie every 49 years (cf Leviticus 25:8-13). Even though it wasn't easy to organise, it was intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another and with all of creation and it involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land and a fallow period for the fields.

In the Catholic Church, the concept of Jubilee or 'Holy Year' was used to declare special years for forgiveness and

reconciliation. The first Jubilee was declared by Pope Boniface VIII on 22 February 1300 (Feast of the Chair of St Peter), to mark the beginning of that century. He later recommended it occurring every 100 years.

Since then they have evolved into occurring every 25 years with occasionally extra ones added according to the wishes of the Pope at the time. Thus in 1983 there was the 1,950th Jubilee of the Redemption and a few years ago we had the Jubilee Year of Mercy called by Pope Francis.

The Holy Father will open the Holy Door at St Peter's (in Rome!) on Christmas Eve and then throughout the year there will special celebrations for different groups in the church. You can find all these details and much more on the special Jubilee website:

<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>

A group from the parish are making a Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi just after Easter and there will be an opportunity to join the Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes at the end of July. We shall have other celebrations as well at home during the year so that in union with the Church we may be renewed in hope.



In his letter introducing the Jubilee Pope Francis wrote:

In the last two years, not a single country has been unaffected by the sudden outbreak of an epidemic that made us experience first-hand not only the tragedy of dying alone, but also the uncertainty and fleetingness of existence, and in doing so, has changed our very way of life. Together with all our brothers and sisters, we Christians endured those hardships and limitations.

Our churches remained closed, as did our schools, factories, offices, shops, and venues for recreation. All of us saw certain freedoms curtailed, while the pandemic generated feelings not only of grief, but also, at times, of doubt, fear and disorientation. The scientific community quickly developed an initial remedy that is gradually permitting us to resume our daily lives.

We are fully confident that the epidemic will be overcome and that the world will return to its usual pattern of personal relationships and social life. This will happen more readily to the extent that we can demonstrate effective solidarity, so that our neighbours most in need will not be neglected, and that everyone can have access

to scientific breakthroughs and the necessary medicines.

We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.

The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope.

This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity. Here I think in particular of the many refugees forced to abandon their native lands.

May the voices of the poor be heard throughout this time of preparation for the Jubilee, which is meant to restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone. As the Bible teaches, "The sabbath of the land shall provide food for you,

for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner who lives with you; for your cattle also, and for the beasts that are in your land, all its yield shall be for food" (Lev 25:6-7).

The spiritual dimension of the Jubilee, which calls for conversion, should also embrace these fundamental aspects of our life in society as part of a coherent whole. In the realisation that all of us are pilgrims on this earth, which the Lord has charged us to till and keep (cf Gen 2:15), may we never fail, in the course of our sojourn, to contemplate the beauty of creation and care for our common home. It is my hope that the coming Jubilee Year will be celebrated and experienced with this intention too.

Growing numbers of men and women, including many young people and children, have come to realise that care for creation is an essential expression of our faith in God and our obedience to his will.

Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, for the Jubilee 2025.



A lovely welcome and some delicious food from the Quakers on a trip to Disley



St Peter's Helpers: celebrating our volunteers

Cuppa and Chat, The Big Tidy (June),
Centenary Choir concert helpers,
Helpers' meal out, Easter special
deliveries

Since the dark days of the first Covid lockdown in March 2020, a team of dedicated volunteers continues to help people within the parish and in our local area. In doing so, we hope to foster a sense of mutual support, where all volunteers have something to offer and receive too.

To all our Helpers, Chai and Chat, Refugee Clothing, Cuppa and Chat, Friendly Phone Calls, Card Making, Special Appeals, Bakers, Makers, Lift givers and Special Deliverers, Mini Vinnies, School Choirs and everyone else, this THANK YOU is for you!

If you'd like to get involved, send an email to stpetershelpers@gmail.com.



Flower arranging special activity with pumpkins





At the end of 10am Mass on a Sunday, the TOASTies come and share their take on the Gospel reading, often with a craft activity. Here's a recent example illustrating how Jesus always helps us on our way and never leaves us on our own.

Time on a Sunday

Dan and Gill Bulley (and Josh) explain their family's reaction to our children's liturgy described by Canon John Rafferty as "the church in the parish centre."

We found TOAST after speaking with Rachel after Mass one Sunday morning back in 2021. We'd been struggling to keep an energetic one year old entertained at the back of church, so we were extremely thankful for her suggestion that we try the TOAST group with the other families in the parish centre the following Sunday - we're very glad we did! It's been a really nice experience and somewhere where we can spend quality family time together on a Sunday morning.

We began attending TOAST when Joshua was around 15 months old and we've seen the progress he has made with his confidence levels when taking part in activities, to wanting to do his own prayer in "prayer time, share time". We've also prepared the weekly quiz on the Gospel of the day a few times now and Joshua enjoys being the quizmaster - and being able to give the answers. It can be tricky coming up with the questions, but it's also fun at the same time.

It's great that we've found something we can all do and enjoy as a family together. We'd definitely recommend coming along if you have young children. You feel as though you're attending church and are part of the community, but you don't have to worry about your child(ren) being fidgety or making too much noise. It's helped me (Dan) with developing my faith and I am

now a Eucharistic Minister for the group. Communion is bought over from church by Deacon John and a Eucharistic Minister at the same time that Communion is happening in church.

During the summer we had a picnic on Fr Peter's lawn, where all the families bought along various snacks and treats. We enjoyed some nice, relaxing time in the sun, while the children were able to run around and play outside. Somebody even arranged for an ice cream van to come and visit us, so we all tucked into some lovely (and very reasonably priced) ice cream! Joshua very much enjoyed his, as you can see from the picture!

The format of the group: the activities, the music and the way the Gospel is delivered really keeps the children engaged. It's great that the children see their friends from school as well - so another plus point if your kids go to St Peter's, St Philip's or St Simon's school. There's plenty of tea, coffee, juice and toast (of course!) on the go, thanks to all the helpers in the kitchen.

Even when TOAST has finished we tend to go straight into the back room to get the toys out for the children, so the fun continues for another hour or so! Everyone's really friendly, so don't be afraid to come and say hello!

Thank you to all the TOASTIE team who make it happen.

TOAST Picnic

Time on a Sunday together



together



TOAST Picnic

Time on a Sunday together



A very special day when two of our TOASTies were baptised



Isabella and Sidney with Fr Peter at their Baptism

What are baptism means to us.

I want to be apart of catholic family and I love God and Jesus. I also think it's easier when you have some godparents. I'm very happy with my choice. mine is Kate Poole and Dave/ David. Also it's easier for my parents to go to work and godparents look after me. Shout out to Fr Peter for baptising me. However in very thankful for my baptism. Your Sincerely Isabella

Amy Rose

What does our baptism mean to us? (Shine school)

I wanted to be baptised because I love Jesus and I wanted to have welcoming arms to heaven in the catholic faith. I'm also very happy since I have got very nice Godparents who have also welcomed me into the catholic faith. I also want to say thank you to Father Peter Sharron for baptising me and my sister sister Isabella it really means a lot. Thank you everyone. - Sidney Rose.

We have been coming to TOAST since our eldest was born nearly three years ago. We are so grateful that we found St Peter's when we moved to Hazel Grove. It's a wonderful community and people such as Teresa, Terry, Rachel and all the other volunteers who work so hard to make TOAST a warm, welcoming family-friendly space have our huge thanks. Our children (and us both) adore TOAST and get so much out of it each week.



Some of the TOASTies did actions to the words of the last hymn 'Jesus, He is the King' to the delight of the bishop.

TOAST is back on Sunday 19 January 2025



Time on a Sunday together

Sunday at 9.30am, St Peter's Parish Centre

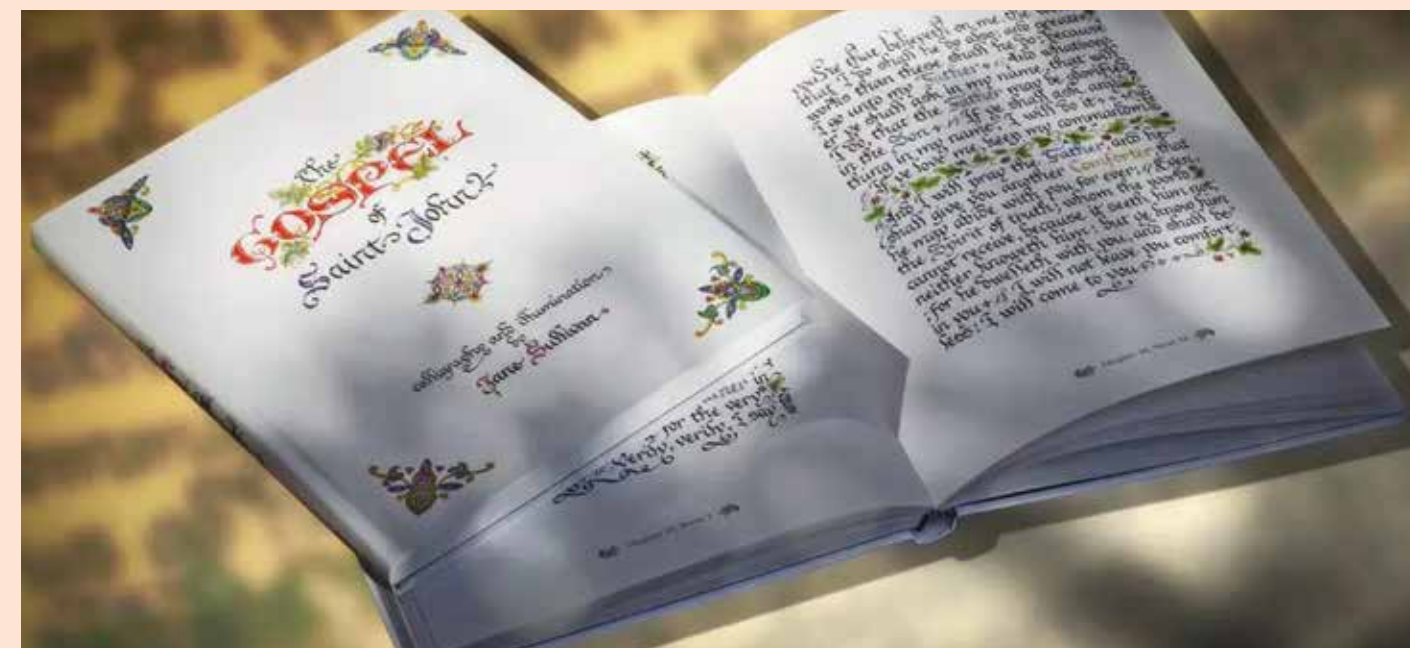
TOAST and
refreshments
at 9.30am

All families are welcome,
we will unpack the Gospel
of the day through music,
prayer, fun and games.

What's at TOAST:
Music
Live interactive Gospel
Quiz and fun activities
Terry's Teaser

You are all very welcome.

For more information about TOAST contact
Teresa Thiele on 07778 848709



Transformed by John's Gospel

Jonathan Goodfellow's insight into John's Gospel

I am surprised that John's Gospel does not come with a Vatican health warning: 'Don't mess too deeply with this document for it has the power to transform your life'.

I started reading John's Gospel with intent some ten years ago. Prior to that, as a regular catholic, I had a very sketchy knowledge of scripture. I knew Matthew, Mark and Luke were known as the synoptic gospels because they shared great similarities and that John was the outsider, the maverick Gospel.

Beyond that I didn't really know where Matthew started or John finished. My understanding of scripture was pretty much limited to the snippets read out at Mass each Sunday.

I had become aware that I was most drawn towards the snippets from John. But all I had were the little snippets, like so many loose pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and I had no idea how they fitted together.

With retirement from work came the opportunity to read through the

New Testament from start to finish and to familiarise myself at a deeper level with John.

John's Gospel, read and re-read as a complete work, transformed my understanding of Jesus and transformed my life. This really was SO different to the synoptics in every way. It was radical, revolutionary and scandalous.

My initial thoughts were how did this ever get into the Christian canon, how did it ever become one of the four Gospels?

And why is there so much poetry in it? Why does everybody consistently misunderstand what Jesus is saying? Why does the Gospel work to a different timescale than the synoptics and why is the crucifixion the moment of God's glory and not the resurrection?

John's Gospel is multi-layered and as such, rewards the time and effort put into getting to know it. It is like a murder mystery – which it is, really. The clues are all there, the reader just has to find them and put them together.

And as I became familiar with the structure, the patterns, the allusions, the symbolism, all of which combine to present an entirely radical Christological theology, I found love, reassurance, strength and life in abundance.

I found a Jesus beyond anything I had ever imagined. I found promises that I had never known about. I found Jesus was speaking directly to us, the readers, and as I dug deeper looking for Jesus I found in the pages of John's Gospel a Jesus actively and continually looking for us.

When reading John, the reader is asked to make a personal response. Jesus asks, in his opening words, "What do you want?" He is asking that question of each of us today and will respond with the inevitable "Come and see."

Jesus talks, in the Gospel, about the need to be born from above, to be born of the spirit and water.

I know of no better way to be born from above, to be born of the spirit, than to read and re-read John's Gospel and develop the personal relationship that both you, and Jesus, are looking for.

John's Gospel has transformed my life and it can transform yours.



Parish's Purple Pakora presence

Stephen Gomez reviews a memorable night out

On Friday 19 April this year, parishioners from St Peter's and St Philip's gathered for food, drinks and great conversation at the increasingly popular men's curry night.

This was my first time attending and, having been advised that there was a chance of a cheeky pint before the meal, I turned up at The Three Tonnes pub at 7pm to find Father Peter, Terry and another half a dozen fellas already halfway through a pint. Clearly an earlier start had taken place!

At 7.20pm a second round of drinks was ordered, safe in the knowledge that Deacon John was already at The Purple Pakora restaurant securing seats. Drinks finished and a safe crossing of the A6 achieved, the Three Tonnes group arrived and joined the main group. Almost 40 of us settled in just as the feast began, and what a feast it was!

Our appetizer was enough poppadoms, chutney, lime pickle et al to sink a battleship and then an equally generous serving of chicken tikkas, onion bhajis and Sheek kebabs for our starters. Thankfully there was time to break from eating,

enabling everyone to converse, order a drink, catch up with some old friends and meet some new ones. The mains then arrived affording everyone to enjoy their curry of choice, rice and shared hanging naan breads, that left everyone full and with enough food for spares to be taken home.

The food was fabulous and the company equally so as I enjoyed conversations throughout the evening including Stockport County (with you know who!), Man City, Ireland, pappadom factories, Australia and £10 Poms, singing in



church and, in a classically English style, the weather.

From what I could see a great evening was had by all and a big thanks is due to Deacon John who made this happen. I look forward to the next curry night and seeing even more people there.



Footsteps

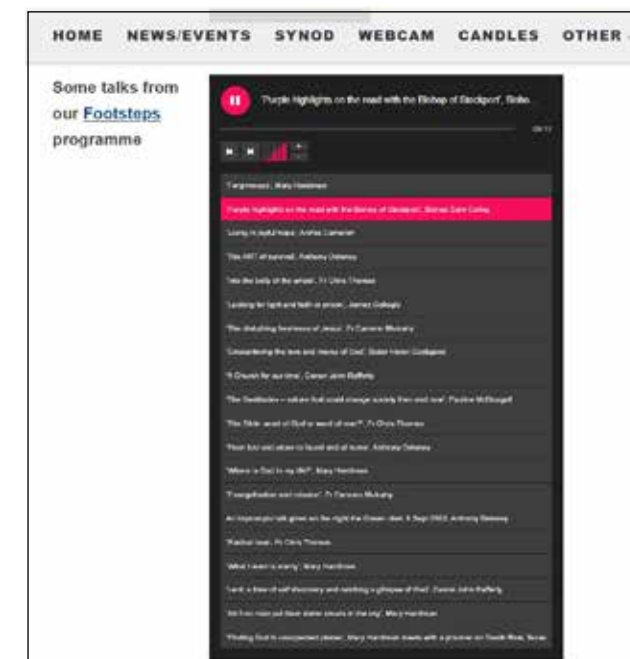
It is great that we can offer the programme we do and open our doors to so many people from so many places. Many parishes don't have the resources we have at St Peter's to run events like Footsteps so it feels incumbent on us and indeed is a pleasure to provide the facilities, the opportunity, the drinks and nibbles, the speakers and the hospitality to as wide a Christian community as we can.

As we welcomed people to our most recent event in November it was heartwarming to hear the response to the question "Have you come far?" posed to an unfamiliar person: "No, only New Mills" came the reply. Often people say Cheadle Hulme, Romiley, Heald Green and so on as they gather at the entrance.

There is so much in our Christian faith that we can ponder, discern, reflect on, question as we live each day. Footsteps provides the opportunity to hear somebody's thoughts and ideas on a particular aspect. It could be a Gospel passage, a specific topic like mercy, forgiveness, survival, or an insight into someone's work or a shared experience.

We deliberately invite people from various Christian denominations to speak and to share their faith journey. Each one has great spiritual insight, deep conviction – and a sense of humour. We follow in their footsteps, we follow their journey, we share their ideas and we digest the food or thought – as well as the nibbles on offer.

The parish centre is set out like a café to create a relaxed, informal venue. There's a great community feel to



our evenings as people arrive to get a seat, a drink, a chat and then settle down to relax, to be inspired, to be spiritually nudged. We don't charge for these events, but that doesn't stop many people wanting to give a little donation. It's all very Christian!

When the Bishop of Stockport came in September, he took us on his own journey to where he is today. +Sam Corley's "Purple highlights" presentation helped us walk in his footsteps from being a boy of six when he fell in love with the vicar's daughter and knew then he wanted to be a vicar! As he quoted various aspects from his encounters over the years, we could reflect on our own and what might inspire us. The lilting tones of Archie Cameron, a former school chaplain from Southport helped us in June to consider "living in joyful hope" and before him Anthony Delaney from the Ivy Church in Didsbury returned to Footsteps to share with us what he'd been addressing to audiences in the Middle East in recent months, the ART of survival. Mary Hardiman got us thinking about forgiveness in a most moving way in November.

If you'd like to hear what you missed, or if you were there and would like to listen again to some of our gems, many are currently available on our parish website at the bottom of the Gallery page.

Our programme for 2025 is shaping up nicely with an assortment of speakers – some new, some familiar. Like our audience, some are coming from further afield now. Watch the parish newsletter for details or if you'd like to be on our mailing list, drop us a note at footsteps2020@mail.com.



Mags and Kate in 2013



One of the many crosses along the way



Mags and Kate walking the Camino in all weathers



Santiago de Compostela cathedral

Walking the Camino de Santiago

The first stage of my Camino de Santiago journey began in March 2013 with my sister Kate.

I'm from Ireland and I moved to Liverpool when I was 21, while Kate lives in Dublin. We're two of five children and there are currently ten grandchildren and four great grandchildren in our family. Family get-togethers in Ireland are busy, noisy and full of fun, with at least ten conversations happening at once!

In 2010, the film 'The Way' was released. In it, Martin Sheen walks the pilgrimage route known as Camino Frances (the French way) from St Jean-Pied-de-Port in France to Santiago de Compostela, in memory of his son. He shares the journey with three other pilgrims he meets along the way. Kate saw the film first and rang me all excited, saying I 'had to watch it!' It's a fantastic film... if you haven't, you should try to watch it too.

We were both really inspired and couldn't wait to get walking - the question was how? Much as we would have loved to walk the entire 772 kms in one go, we both had kids and worked full time, so an extended break wasn't an option. As we were both teachers, we decided to compromise and to do the first stage (St-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Pamplona)

Mags Coffey takes us on her journey of pilgrimage



The shell symbolizes the Apostle James, who was said to have been buried in Santiago

during our Easter breaks in late March 2013. We hadn't a clue what it would be like, and set off from St-Jean-Pied-de-Port, full of enthusiasm, with limited training, massive backpacks (nearly 20 kgs each!), and in bad weather!

Our first couple of days were hard going. We were carrying far too much, we got blisters, it snowed and tragically a 44-year-old Brazilian pilgrim was found dead close to Roncesvalles in the Pyrenees. This led

to us being diverted back down the mountain by the French Gendarmerie to continue through the safer valley route. A sad reminder (and very reminiscent of the film) of why the stretch between St-Jean-Pied-de-Port and Roncesvalles closes each winter.

Despite the challenges, we loved it. After our first day's walking, we stayed at Kayola, an overflow hostel for the main one at Orisson. That evening, we went to Orisson for our first communal pilgrims' meal, where we all took turns sharing our reasons for walking 'the way'.

These varied greatly, with some pilgrims having recovered from major illness or having lost loved ones; one couple was celebrating being together ten years, having first met on the Camino, while others were looking for guidance to make life changes.

Kate and I were mostly walking for fun and to celebrate being 'Irish twins' (ie born less than 12 months apart), who were both 50 for part of 2013. Our night at Orisson was both

unexpected and brilliant and the camaraderie and spirit of the Camino that we felt set the scene for the rest of the week to come.

We quickly found ourselves relaxing into the pace of life; the simplicity of walking, eating and sleeping (with the odd glass of wine or two for good measure!) and we embraced the opportunity to chat with so many amazing people.

A particular highlight was being able to start, reflect on and finish conversations with Kate and other pilgrims - a rarity in our busy lives. The hardest part of ending the first Camino stage in Pamplona was saying goodbye to the friends we had made in such a short time - we just wanted to keep walking. Needless to say, as soon as we got home we began planning for the next seven stages, with Easter breaks ring-fenced moving forwards.

The Camino is often described as a 'metaphor for the journey of life', and cringey as this sounds it has certainly been the case for Kate and

me. Our journey spanned 12 years instead of 8. Some years we were unable to continue our travels due to family illness, 'big' birthdays, and of course COVID-19!! We finally reached Santiago de Compostela in March this year (in the freezing cold and pouring rain)!

So much has happened over our 12-year journey, including marriages, deaths and births. We've had such highs and lows, for example seeing our children marry and become parents to four gorgeous grandchildren. We have both turned 60 (which I was lucky enough to do on the Camino with Kate), and tragically, we lost our brother Hugh, who died aged 50 in 2016.

We've loved every minute of it, even when tired, wet or sore - it's been an amazing experience. It's been so good that I've started it again! This time with my husband Phil, and our very good friends Paul and Mary-Anne...

As of September this year, the four of us have completed the third stage

(ending up in Burgos). Now that we're all retired, we are hoping to make quicker progress than Kate and I were able to - obviously very much dependent on what life throws at us!

It's such a pleasure and privilege to be able to share the 'spirit of the Camino' and see Phil, Paul and Mary-Anne enjoying it as much as I have!

There is undoubtedly a 'spirit of the Camino', although I don't know if I can put it into words properly. For me (and I'm sure it's different for everyone) it is about sharing, having time to think, learning and having fun. Sharing: friendship, love, stories, snacks, blister plasters or wine! Having time to think... there's something meditative about putting one foot in front of the other for days at a time.

Learning, from others, by experience (smaller backpacks and fewer blisters now!) and through having time to reflect. And last, but not least, having fun: it's brilliant - if you get the chance, you should take it! Buen Camino.



Phil, Mags, Mary-Anne and Paul

Someone *bright* and *beautiful*

If you are an artist, you have to create. There is an energy, an urgency that you have to express. It's who you are. Meet Maria-Elena.

When we went to visit her, we were told to look for the hedge with animals carved into it and bins hand-painted with flowers. Inside, her dog, a Jack Russell, stands lifelike in its once favourite place; on the wall, a rabbi and an imam seem forever engrossed in discussion, leaning into the light; there are busts of Beethoven and Chopin looking out from the heights of the bookshelves; the moment of creation, borrowed from Michelangelo, looks over you on the stairs; a portrait of Dickens... Everywhere pictures, sculptures, images – a visual feast. All flowing from the eye, the hands and the heart of this extra-ordinary woman: Maria-Elena O'Grady.

Who is she? Her name is a clue. A Spanish lady married to an Irish celt. She arrived in London in November 1963 and met her 'Irish celt' in December in Westminster

cathedral. What did she do when she was married? "I was a Professor of mathematics," she retorted with a laugh. She explains, "I had three children and had to manage it all with the finances of a social worker husband." She is intensely proud of their children and grandchildren; most of them are blessed with the same artistic dust that God sprinkled on her – musicians, artists and academics.

Where did her talent come from? She had an aunt who was a very well known and respected portrait painter in Spain in the first half of the 20th century. She herself has had no formal training. Indeed, she arrived in the UK as a PE teacher. But she is blessed with an 'eye' and that 'urgency' to create what she sees. In many ways her lack of formal training is an asset, because she has the confidence to try out different techniques and the humility to learn from mistakes.

When you meet her now, what will strike you is her restless curiosity about the world. And all this is



Maria-Elena

clothed with an anarchic and mischievous sense of the absurd. Her sense of humour relishes bringing the pompous down to ground level. I know!!

Why should you be interested in her? If you are passing St Philip's church on Half Moon Lane in Offerton, call in. On the right as you enter, where once there was an oft-broken window, there now is a mosaic celebrating creation: "All things bright and beautiful".



The mosaic was blessed by Canon John Rafferty at the end of July. Fr Peter was in Lourdes at the time, so he missed the celebration cake and bubbly.



St Peter's Hazel Grove
100 YEARS
1923 - 2023



Celebrating our parish centenary

On Saturday, 29 June 2024 we celebrated the centenary of our parish, so marking the feast day of the patron of our parish, St Peter. Bishop Mark Davies concelebrated our midday Mass with many former priests and a deacon of the parish alongside Fr Peter and Deacon John. Our church was packed to the rafters and fortunately the weather stayed fine for us to enjoy a glass of something sparkling on the parish lawn afterwards. Then we gathered in the beautifully decorated parish centre for a buffet and happy conversations for several hours.

Over the whole of the weekend, Friday

to Sunday, we had the most impressive and moving flower festival, designed and executed by our four flower arranging teams. The artistry, creativity, thoughtfulness and craftsmanship was outstanding and donations received from visitors totalling almost £435, were given to St Ann's Hospice and Francis House.

Do look at our pictures of the weekend, watch the recording of our wonderful Centenary Mass on our website, sing along with us and share the joy of our wonderful parish community. Here's to the next 100 years!



Gerry Clarke wrote: A lively happy gathering! Having experienced the day too, with awareness of the lives of the saints, Peter and Paul to be significant, I'm glad to commemorate the special occasion with this poetry.

Peter

On a slope leading to the Sea of Galilee
A shepherd led his flock into a green field.
Nearby, a fisherman cooling his feet in Sea's edge
Head bent, fastidiously mending dry nets.
Passing by from next village, the Nazarene,
Kind countenance, stopped with a soft call:
"Simon Peter. Leave. Come. Follow me."

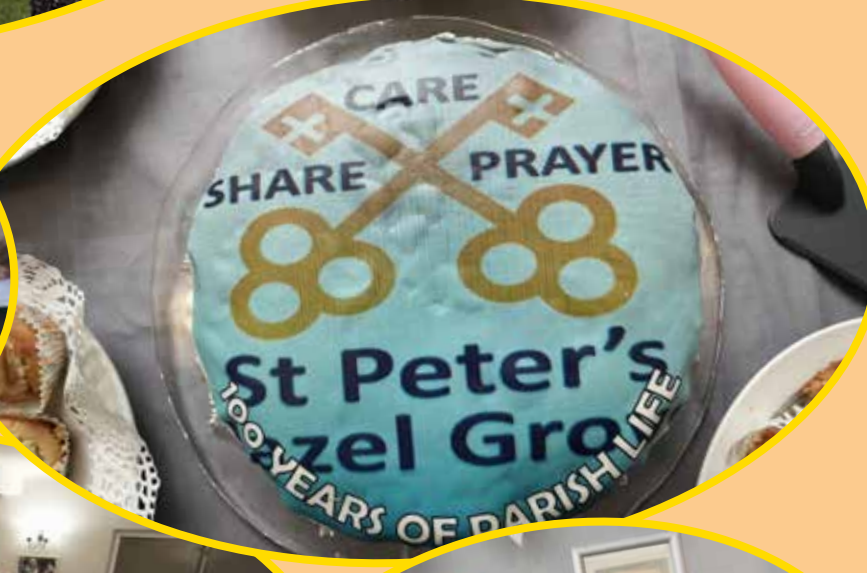


Paul

Gathering clouds crept over restless Rome,
Reaching unsettled region of Empire, Judea.
Saul, citizen of the city, leading a thousand men to Damascus
Astride his horse, suddenly struck to the ground by lightning.
A voice, moment of grace, asked "Why...?"
Turning point of conversion from the sword to the pen:
To gifted Paul of powerful letters to national tribes, to live and love better.

Epilogue: Brothers of Faith

As followers of the word swelled villages and towns
The dark shadows moved from capital over unsettled Judea:
As shaken Nero imprisoned the first bishop Peter
Peripatetic Paul of Letters seized from a listening Syria:
Both risked death by martyrdom,
Unswerving love and loyalty to the words of the Nazarene.
Weeds and wild flowers grew alongside the pebbled road to Rome.
As millennia of conflict ensued, so too many pilgrimages of hope
to silent Jerusalem.





A Reflection on the Centenary Flower Festival

When we were asked to arrange a flower festival for the centenary we didn't hesitate to accept the task. We like a challenge!

For months before, ideas were bantered between us and we finally decided to arrange displays to represent the diverse groups in the parish and to celebrate some key events in the last 100 years.

As the date for the festival grew nearer, we met up regularly to discuss our ideas and source materials and props. (Temu was priceless!)

The week of the festival arrived and with great excitement we took delivery of the flowers from the wholesalers. Everyone helped to condition them and store them safely in the garage. By Monday afternoon all the stock was in water and we started to get all the mechanics in place in church. The next day we split into small groups, each taking ownership of a display. By Thursday evening, with a sigh of relief, we met our deadline.

The teams work separately throughout the year, joining forces at Easter and Christmas, so it was great for us all to spend so much time together doing something we love to do, sharing laughs and camaraderie.

The wonderful feedback was very much appreciated, making us all very proud of our achievements. People commented on how wonderful, emotional and joyous it all was. The memories will remain with us for a long time.

We would like to thank everyone who helped make the flower festival such a success. Also, the parish is lucky that Fr Peter appreciates what we do and allows us to arrange fresh flowers each week, thereby helping to make the church feel alive and uplifting.

If you would like to join one of our teams you will be made very welcome. Colette.





My memories of Hazel Grove and St Peter's date back to 1948 when my Dad, John Robinson, became the Postmaster and the family moved from Stalybridge to London Road. At that time all the shops in the Grove were family-owned and the village was booming and buzzing with life, trams were even clanging down the main road!

St Peter's church immediately became a big part of our lives and I remember lots of Masses, Benediction services, missions and long queues for confession. The Parish Priest then, Fr Joseph Quinn, was a frequent visitor at our house, enjoying a cup of tea and the opportunity to post his football coupon. He quickly enrolled my brother John as an altar boy and his friends there included Mickey Waldron, Terry Mallon and Anthony Begley who lived next door to the church.

The church itself was not the beautiful church it is today and the hall was a dusty wooden building; I don't remember a car park. But it was there we all assembled to take part in what seem to be numerous processions which I really enjoyed: May processions, Blessed Sacrament processions, the girls in their long white dresses, wreaths and veils and often with strewing baskets, the Children of Mary in their blue cloaks, nuns in their black and white habits, lots of altar boys and lots of parishioners.

I also remember a newly ordained priest, Fr Hurley coming to our house to watch the Oxford and Cambridge boat race on our newly acquired 12 inch television, bought especially for the 1953 coronation and later on, the good looking Fr Roper, who often came to speak to the Children of Mary group run by Sister Celsus from the Convent at Buxton Road.



Damian's Confirmation in 1974 standing to the left of Bishop Brewer

Sheila Jeffers remembers

As a teenager I joined the church choir. Vera Davidson was the Choir Mistress and Anthony Booth the organist.

Other members were Margaret and Michael Newcombe, Olga Peel, Cissie Smith, John Hadfield, John Horan and Mrs Dwerryhouse. Vera had some ambitious ideas at times for special occasions, not always totally successful if I remember rightly but we seemed to practise a lot!

The last priest I remember before we left Hazel Grove was Fr Walsh. My Dad loved his visits and often recounted the time when Father came

into the Post Office on a Monday morning for my Dad to count the Sunday collection. He said "John, the parishioners here are still living in the Bronze Age " because the bag was so heavy with copper coins! He was a popular priest with a wry sense of humour.

In 1960 we became parishioners at Our Lady's. I joined the choir and the Operatic Society where I met my future husband Peter Jeffers. We were married there by Fr Ryan and the altar boy was a young boy called Peter Sharrocks. Now more than 60 years later Fr Peter, (another popular priest with a wry sense of humour) is here to celebrate 100 years of this wonderful parish.

We returned to the parish in 1974 and our children Damian, Catherine, Carmel and Daniel all attended St Simon's School when Gerry Clarke and Chris O'Gara were there. So, lots of happy memories! I am a parishioner now at St Vincent's, but always feel very welcomed here and still part of this lovely community.

May God bless everyone, past and present parishioners and priests on this very special occasion.



Fr Russell and the Jeffers family at Carmel's First Communion

The holy dusters

An insight into how our church gets its shine.

We are so lucky to belong to St Peter's parish. We have a lovely church and not only are the people welcoming, the church itself always looks inviting.

This is partly due to our cleaning teams who work hard to make the church look its best. There are six regular teams, with the work being shared by men and women of all ages – but new volunteers are always welcome (no experience is necessary)! For you, this could be a way of meeting new people or catching up with old friends. We also meet up once a year to share a meal together.

One of our teams started many years ago bringing their small 'helpful' toddlers with them – the toddlers eventually had to be banned from zealously polishing the altar servers' benches! Due to work commitments this team had to retire as 'holy dusters' but returned a few years later and now enjoy cleaning followed by a meal out, as a way of keeping in touch.

We enjoy chatting as we clean and maybe even gossiping, but only if we are sure the sound system is off!

There is often laughter at some of the things found whilst cleaning. Some things we find almost tell a story of church life – confetti, sequins from First Communion dresses or Christmas party outfits, pine needles from the Christmas Tree Festival, orders of service from weddings and funerals.

There is also a great feeling of satisfaction from a job well done in



leaving the church clean and shiny and waiting to welcome the next people.

We are so grateful for the service given by the many 'holy dusters' over the years. We are trying to compile a list of all cleaners, past and present but don't want to miss anyone out. So, we would be grateful to receive any names for our list.

We realise that people lead busy lives but we would be grateful if anyone felt able to help clean our church. It

only takes a few hours every six weeks. The teams have all chosen different days and times, so you should be able to choose whatever suits you best or even create your own team!

Please do consider joining us, taking the opportunity to meet new people and also to have the satisfaction of making our church shine!

You'll find the contact details for Church cleaners on page 43 if you can provide names of past or future 'holy dusters'.





Finding our way but making good progress

Margaret with help from Tom reflects on our second inclusion Mass.

On 6 October, a second Mass was held for the disability inclusion group. This group aims to make the Holy Mass more accessible for anyone who finds the usual format too regimented and, possibly, uncomfortable, yet longs to be able to attend Mass, stress-free, like most people.

At the second Mass, we are still finding our way and probably still making mistakes, but, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the people who attend, hopefully we are slowly making the Mass the consoling, uplifting experience it is meant to be.

Our first concern is to make people feel welcome, relaxed and reassured. We had several welcomers in the porch, chatting to people and guiding them towards the adaptations and sensory aids. At the back of the church, on either side, benches have been removed to accommodate wheelchairs and buggies. There is also a selection of fidget and sensory items provided for stress relief during

their visit as well as ear protection. Within the church, there are always plenty of helpers to guide, reassure and answer questions. The pews are arranged as usual, but every effort is made to make sure everyone is given plenty of room. For those who might need 'time out', a breakout space in the sacristy is identified.

In order to limit tension, the Mass is reduced to 30 minutes though all the essential elements are there. The readings of the Mass are simplified and may be shortened. The theme of the Mass is explained at the beginning and the readings are signed for greater clarity, using either Makaton or BSL.

The offertory is designed to fit in with the theme of the Mass and each person is invited to take part by contributing a simple drawing or thought which they may produce or simply select. The children then collect each one and take them to the altar in the offertory procession. These are

placed on the altar during the Mass, but later will be displayed in church for a few weeks.

During Mass, there may be one or two hymns. These are usually quite simple and are accompanied by piano rather than the organ, which can be a little overpowering. Bells are also avoided at this Mass. At the end the children distribute simple instruments (shakers) for a gentle, but joyous final hymn.

Hearing dogs are often present to help relax people. They are also there as an indication that anyone who has a guide dog can bring them along if they wish.

After Mass, there is time for more social interaction including teas and coffees and refreshments and the gathering of feedback in order to move forward. These are tiny steps, but hopefully going in the right direction. This time we had another first – Isaac who is in year 4

at St Peter's school, read the bidding prayers for us. Well done, Isaac!

No report on an inclusion Mass could be complete without mention of the enormous contribution made by Father Pat. He dedicated years of service to the sick in Lourdes, but no occasion could have been more meaningful than the first time he stood before them to serve them as one of them. Now, despite the restrictions on his activities, he is there as the mainstay of the Mass preparations and our faithful celebrant. Thank you, Fr Pat, for all you do to help us in this important mission and undertaking.

If you are someone who sometimes struggles with actually being in church for Mass, why not see if the inclusion Mass would suit you? "Disability inclusion" can be off-putting for some. It shouldn't be. We all have disabilities, some even we don't realise! Whether our condition is obvious or hidden, if the inclusion Mass is more comfortable for you, then it's for you. Ideally, the inclusion Masses is celebrated to cater for a variety of needs to include people with different strengths and struggles.

By the time this article is published in Shine, we will have had our third Mass at the beginning of December. If anyone would like to step in and help out any time, we always welcome volunteers. For more information contact: inclusionstpeters@gmail.com.

The dates of our inclusion Masses for 2025 are: 2 March, 29 June, 5 October and 7 December.



What's going on at SPY

This year, St Peter's Youth (SPY) group started the season focused on those in need, with the group's chosen charity, the Stockport Foodbank. A big thank you to both the youth and their families for a very successful first collection of donations dropped off at our meeting on 9 November. Our SPY group donations focused on items most needed by the Foodbank; this is a great help to those who are not as privileged as we are. With Advent around the corner, we encouraged people to consider the Foodbank's Reverse Advent initiative by starting a collection box and putting in a much needed item on each day of Advent.

SPY and Confirmation

On 22 June a number of St Peter's youth, including those preparing for confirmation, enjoyed a very well organised, full away day of reflection at Savio House, incorporating a not too taxing group walk up to White Nancy for a well-deserved breath of fresh air and some magnificent views. A great way to truly appreciate the nature around us and all we should be grateful for. Those interested in Confirmation are invited to join us at SPY sessions with Confirmation preparation starting in February 2025 and running to early July.

We always have plenty of fun, not to mention enough pizza, hotdogs and snacks and we especially enjoy creating a very welcoming atmosphere. If you want to hear more, please don't hesitate to contact Deacon John or Rachel: mckay7897@hotmail.com. Otherwise, just come along!

What we get up to
SPY is open to all young people from Year 7 onwards and, along with our work for charity, we have a really good time, with great ice breakers including human noughts and crosses and stories of the flying monk! We enjoy creating a very welcoming atmosphere.
Meetings are held in the parish centre conveniently at 7pm, straight after the 6pm Mass and end at 8:30pm.



Some of our celebrations after Confirmation in church this summer.



Meeting dates in 2025	
Date	Notes
12 January	
16 February	Confirmation group join us
16 March	
6 April	Early due to Easter season
13 April	Palm Sunday. No SPY meeting. SPY are actively participating in Mass at 6pm. Arrive 4:45pm for practice beforehand.
11 May	
15 June	
21 June	Proposed date for day trip

Curious about what we get up to?
Use your smart phone camera to scan the QR code on the right.



Growing up in my previous church candles weren't really a thing but then I joined the Catholic church and so began a journey of understanding.

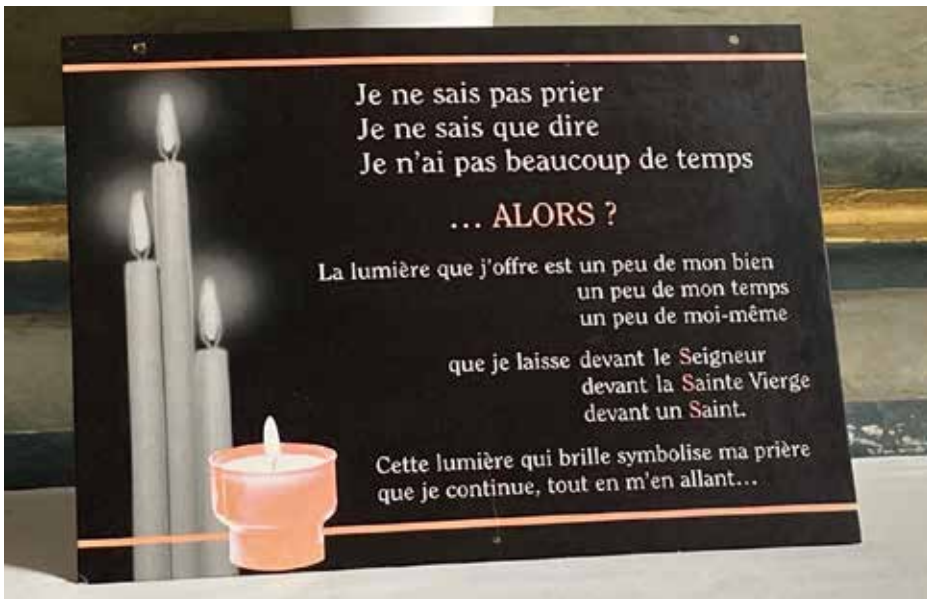
I noticed they were regularly used. I enjoyed looking at them but was not really engaged. Gradually, over time, I began to see the symbolism and significance.

There were the Baptismal candles reminding us that the light of Christ has entered the child's life, with the candle symbolising the flame of faith which we hope will burn throughout the child's life.

Less successful was an Advent candle I tried to use as a way of sharing quiet time and reflection as a family. Unfortunately, we couldn't get the timing right – forgetting to light it, then accidentally burning through 3 or 4 days at once. The focus seemed to have switched to our competitive teenagers trying to spot when the candle had reached the right place rather than peacefully praying!

I think the biggest impact was the first time I went to the Easter triduum – I loved the lighting of the Easter candle symbolising the Risen Christ. I still find the procession as the candle is brought into the church incredibly moving. How wonderful to watch the Light of Christ being shared amongst the congregation and the darkness fading away!

Our visits to France continued this journey of discovery. France has so many beautiful churches, all burning brightly with candles. I started to sit and use the candles as a focus for prayer, watching the flame and smoke spiralling heavenwards carrying the prayers.



What do candles mean to us?

*A reflection from Helen Macdonald
Mothers' Prayers Group*

A few years later we were in France again and a good friend was ill and suddenly I found myself lighting candles and praying for her. It made me feel connected - while there was little that I could do for her in a practical way, I had a sense of being able to take some action physically, emotionally and spiritually by lighting a candle and praying.

Candles can help us focus on prayer and the wonder of communicating with the Lord in many ways. They can be lit as a thanksgiving, as a prayer for those in need or as an offering of ourselves to God. I love the candles at our Mothers' Prayers Group and the sense of peace and prayerfulness as we kneel before the altar bringing our prayers to God. They can also be used to commemorate those we have lost in many ways. For example, each October, when Baby Loss Awareness week culminates in a Wave of Light. Candles are lit at 7pm local time and burn for an hour in memory of all babies gone too soon.

The final part of my learning curve came when we were in France this year and I was lighting a candle in a church and I saw this poster.

The fact that it was in a different language meant I had to focus more fully on the words as I tried to work out the meaning (although I have to admit I did need some help – thank you Mary!):

**I don't know how to pray
I don't know what to say
I don't have a lot of time
So.....
The light that I offer is a little of my goodness
A little of my time
A little of me
Which I leave before the Lord
Before the Blessed Virgin
Before a Saint
This light which shines
symbolises my prayer as I continue on my way**

And then I understood - the candle represents our prayers and continues to do so after we have left. Now I see all candles that way - those in church, at Mothers' Prayers Group, in people's windows and even the Advent candle I'd dismissed – how amazing!



Mary's corner

Mary Hardiman offers her thoughts on the role of Mary in the Christmas narrative and asks us some searching questions.

Rejoice, highly favoured!

I always find it very interesting how little we really know about Mary, the Mother of Jesus. If you look at any statue or artistic representation of her, we usually see Mary looking very meek, hands together in prayer and head bowed. She is always portrayed as someone of incredible beauty, and she probably was. However, I tend to think that beauty comes from within; beautiful people have a way of being that is kind and inclusive, non-judgemental and attractive to be around.

Most of what we know about Mary comes from the Infancy Narratives and particularly from Luke's account of the Annunciation, where the Angel Gabriel comes to find Mary, asking her permission to be used by God as a means of bringing his son into the world. We can learn so much from this short account that I would like to unpick for you. There are some questions for you to consider and pray about.

The bible reference is Luke 1:26-38. Gabriel is sent by God to an obscure town where he enters Mary's home and greets her with the words, "Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

Familiarity with a story can often cause us to lose its impact. But I invite you to imagine this scene in your mind's eye. A young woman, going about her ordinary business is approached by the Angel of the Most High God and told to rejoice because she is so highly favoured by him and because the Lord is with her.

What would your first response be if you heard those words spoken to you?

Can you believe that you are highly favoured by God and that he is with you, not just right now, at Christmas or when you come to church, but in every moment of every day and night? This 24/7 God never leaves you and he favours you, he loves you and he cares about the minutiae of your daily life. I invite you to pause for a moment to consider this reality.

Understandably Mary was deeply disturbed by these words and wondered what the Angel's greeting might mean. I love the humanity of Mary's response; I don't know about you but I'd probably be terrified, even though the words are affirming and kind. I often hear so many people tell me how much easier it is to hear bad words said about them; criticism and judgement can flow so easily from our lips, putting others down and doing nothing to build self-esteem. Maybe Mary didn't think she was that great; who knows? We know nothing of her popularity in the neighbourhood. What we do know is that as a woman, she would have been viewed as a second-class citizen with no rights and little in the way of a voice.

You see, it's the insignificant ones who are so often chosen by God for something considerable. Our lovely God is all for raising the lowly, giving the voiceless a voice and those without status or importance a profound sense of belonging in his Kingdom. There's a beautiful song by



Lauren Daigle called 'You Say.' If you can, I urge you to find it. The chorus says this:

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing.

You say I am strong when I think I am weak.

You say I am held when I am falling short.

And when I don't belong, oh you say I am yours.

Again, I invite you to ponder the words to this song and take them as your own.

The angel said to her, "Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus."

Such a simple and straightforward message prefaced with the reassurance that Mary has nothing to fear since the favour of the Lord is on her. So often we delay or deny God's plan for our lives because of fear; we hold back because we're scared of what God might be asking us to do; believe me I know this! But it's worth remembering that God never leaves us; that is his promise and we do well to claim it.

Is there something you think God might be asking of you and of which you're afraid? Can you ask the Lord to heal your fear?

The Angel then tells Mary that [her son] "will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob forever and his reign will have no end."

It's interesting because when you look at the life and death of Jesus, not everyone thought he was great. He was continually criticised by the scribes and Pharisees for breaking the Sabbath and hanging around with sinners, misunderstood by those who had a different view of

the Messiah, left by so many followers who just couldn't handle his message of inclusive love, then finally beaten and crucified. Not that great on paper but something truly remarkable to those who believe in his resurrection!

Do you believe in the everlasting greatness and kingship of Jesus? Is he the king of your life?

See how Mary listens so graciously to the words of her visitor before she speaks.

"But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?"

Again, such a human and natural response! But the deeper meaning for us is that we too are called to bring Christ into the world, even when we don't think we have the credentials to do so. But it's not about our human power; it's about God and about giving God permission to do what God wants to do in and through us.

Can you give God permission to use you as he would like to?

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you", the angel answered, "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God."

I love the way the gospel writer subtly introduces the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of God the Father will cover you with its shadow and Jesus the Son of God will be holy, just as God is holy. It takes my breath away. And the beauty of it is that each of us is called to the same holiness if we allow this same Spirit and this same power to cover us with its loving and protective shadow.

"Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God."

I love the thoughtfulness of Gabriel in delivering this message to Mary. Sometimes we all need reassurance that 'it's not just me.' Not only that but it's such good news! Elizabeth had waited so long, as we often wait so long for an answer to prayer. In times of doubt, I think it's worth remembering that the saints didn't have everything handed to them so easily. The invitation to trust when prayer feels unanswered is always offered and despair will not have the final say; that belongs to God.

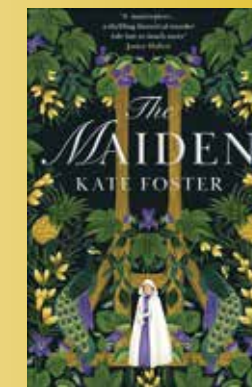
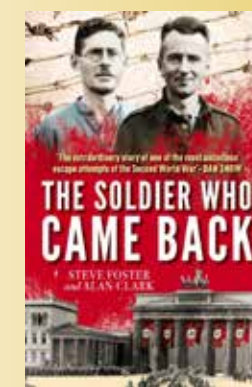
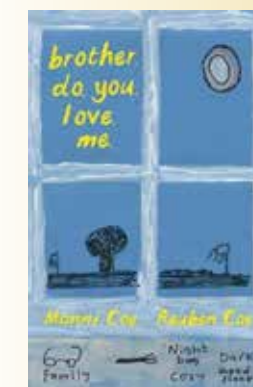
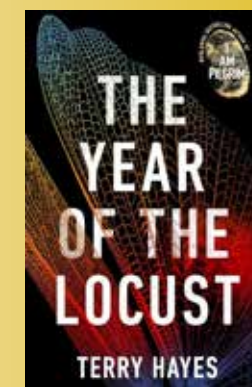
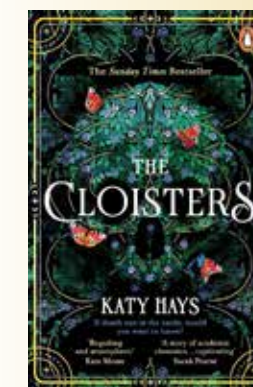
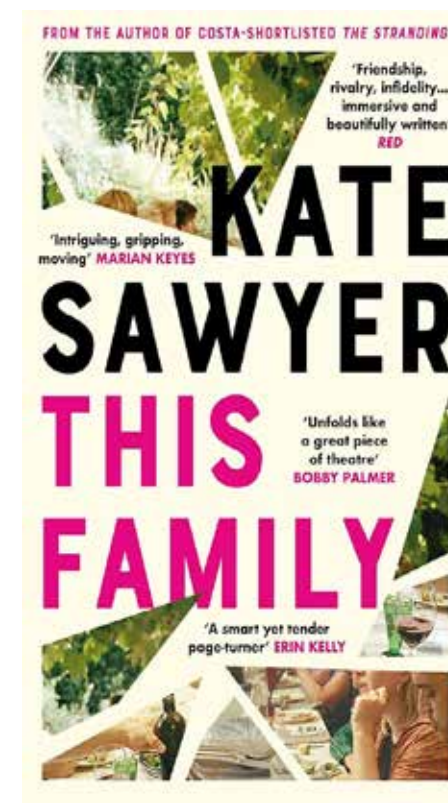
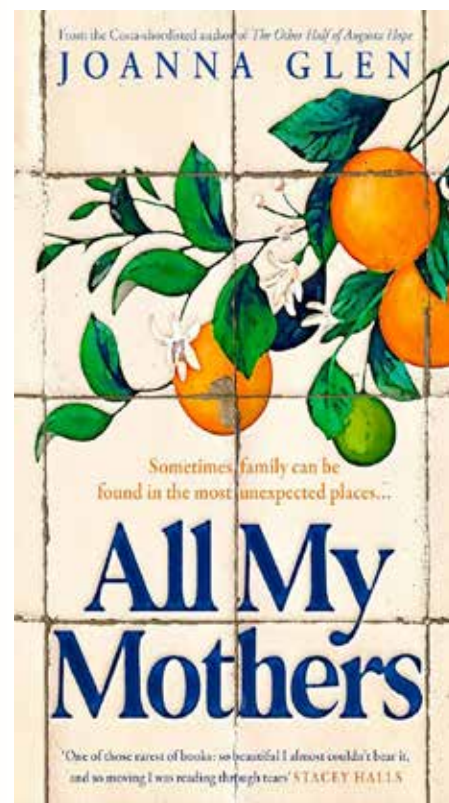
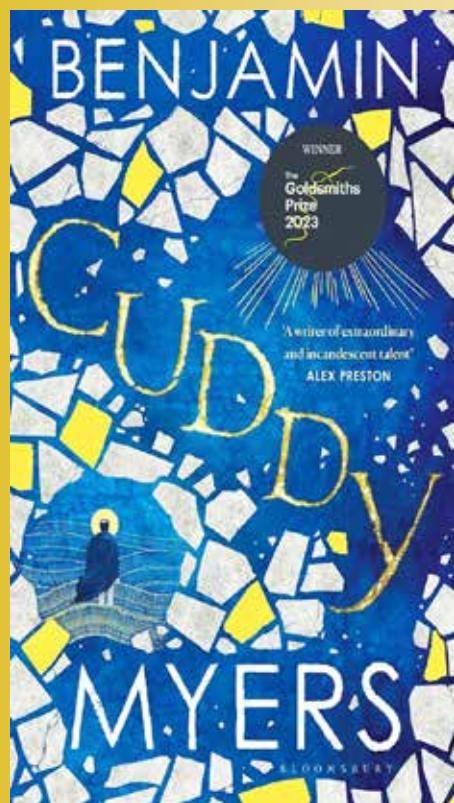
Can you or do you want to believe that nothing is impossible to God? Can you ask for the grace to know this?

"I am the handmaid of the Lord," said Mary, "let what you have said be done to me."

Finally, Mary gives her yes. She gives her yes in the full knowledge that this will not be easy. In those days pregnancy outside of marriage was a scandal and a disgrace and she would have known this. But as I've just said, things don't come easily; life isn't like that. But God is a steadfast God and he never breaks his promises. Mary is his choice; she always was and she always will be. Mary is more than good enough in his eyes. No matter what anyone else might think (and I've no doubt her pregnancy would have set tongues wagging) she knows at some visceral level that God will never leave her and he will never forsake her. She knows that she is his beloved, his highly favoured one and it is in this knowing that she can rejoice, exult and proclaim the goodness of God.

You too are God's highly favoured. Know this and rejoice.

Happy Christmas!



St Peter's Book Club

Mason Cooley, an American literary academic and aphorist said, 'Reading gives us some place to go when we have to stay where we are.' In relation to the books we have read this year, Mason Cooley is right, because place has featured heavily – places of safety, places of disconnection and fear, places of faith and places that endure in our souls for ever more.

One of the best books we have recommended this year is a tale that transports the reader to times and places that span over 1,000 years. **Cuddy by Benjamin Myers** is a creative retelling of the story of St Cuthbert across four different historical eras, from the Vikings to the modern day. The clever use of poetry and story, with well-researched sources scattered throughout, really enhances what is a beautifully written tale. The first part of the book tells the story from Cuthbert's death in 687, to the monks leaving Lindisfarne to flee from the Vikings in 793. The monks go on a seven-year journey, carrying the remains of Cuddy to find a safe place for his body to rest, eventually at Dunelm (modern day Durham). The second section is set in 995, in the shadow of the cathedral,

Alison McGarr reviews the latest titles on the club's bookshelves.

where a woman living in a place of violence and fear, falls in love with a gentle stonemason. Fast forward to 1827: the third section is the journal of an Oxford academic, who travels to the north to witness the disinterment of a body at the cathedral. This part of the book twists into a Victorian ghost story and reminds me of Mr Lockwood's experience of the 'north' at Thrushcross Grange in Wuthering Heights. The final chapter is set in

St Peter's Book Club meets up 3-4 times a year for a meal and a lively discussion about the books we have read – there is no pressure to read all the books as we dip in and out depending on our own busy schedules. Please do get in touch if you would like to recommend a good book or if you would like to join us, the telephone number can be found on page 43 of Shine or in the parish newsletter.

2019, Michael Cuthbert is a young man caring for his sick mother. This is a moving reflection on family love and the importance of faith, set against a backdrop of zero-contract hours and one which emphasises the daily choices those living in poverty must face in the world today.

The book's strength for me is the quality of the writing; Benjamin Myers writes beautifully and his descriptions of the mundane places, the everyday aspects of life, are sublime. His portrayal of a bus station is one of the most evocative pieces of writing I have ever read: 'There is a strong stench of urine, the invisible scent markings of feral men after midnight staining the cold concrete. The stench of its perfume of bus stations everywhere; the desperate reek of transience at the crossroads of the intoxicated.'

We didn't recommend the next book through the newsletter, but **The Offing by Benjamin Myers**, is a lovely read and completely different to **Cuddy**.

Set shortly after the end of World War Two, a young man leaves his home to explore the world before following his father down the coalmine. After a short period of time wild camping, he arrives at Robin's Hood Bay in North Yorkshire where he works for an old lady. Once again, the writing is beautiful and evokes a place in time, a summer long gone, when lifelong friendships were forged, forever to be remembered. A lovely book.

All My Mothers by Joanna Glen, is a book split into two halves and two distinct places. The coldness of London reflects the solitude and isolation of a young girl who feels trapped in the wrong nest, followed by the heat, the vibrancy and the love she finds in Cordoba, Spain. This is the story of Eva, who searches endlessly for the love and for the home she craves. The portrayal of the ancient city of Cordoba is one of the best features of this book. The reader is almost seduced by the imagery of narrow streets ready to be explored, with squares full of flowers and the fragrance of orange blossom in summer an ever-present reminder of happier times. I challenge anyone to read this book and not put Cordoba on their bucket list of places to be visited.

This Family by Kate Sawyer, is another story rooted in place. The family home and the shade of the willow tree on a beautiful September day create the

backdrop for a story which spans over 40 years. This is the story of Mary and her fractured family – the family that has grown up and flown the nest are all brought together again for Mary's marriage. The importance of the home is central to the plot of this story – an ever-present feature as the twists and turns of life make their indelible and often traumatic mark.

With the exception of a short foray into Cordoba, the books I have chosen to review above are all set in England. They offer a glimpse into the English countryside, the city of Durham and its surrounding areas and the everyday experiences of ordinary lives that many of us can recognise and connect with. I hope you enjoy the places they take you to.

The other books we have recommended this year are:

Cloisters by Katy Hays which sees a young girl working for the summer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. An unexpected death and the girl is suddenly at the centre of a dangerous game of power and ambition.

Brother Do You Love Me written by Manni and Reuben Coe - this is based on a true story. In November 2020, at the height of the Covid pandemic, Manni received a text from his brother Reuben, who has Down's Syndrome

and who was alone in his room in a care home in Dorset. Reuben's text message was 'Brother, do you love me?' and it was a cry for help. This is the story of how Manni responded to that cry.

No Time for Goodbye by Linwood Barclay is a disappearance mystery – a young girl wakes up one day to find her whole family has just vanished. Twenty-five years later, she learns the truth.

The Soldier Who Came Back by Steve Foster is the true story of two men who struck up a friendship whilst prisoners at a Nazi war camp in Northern Poland and then planned and carried out an audacious escape, travelling into the heart of Nazi Germany.

The Year of the Locust by Terry Hayes is by the same author as **I am Pilgrim**, which we recommended some time ago and like **I am Pilgrim**, it involves a hunt by an elite espionage agent, Ripley Kane, for a mystery figure known as 'the locust,' who is planning a huge terrorist hit.

The Maiden by Kate Foster, set in 17th century Edinburgh, is a fictional account of the real-life murder of James Forrester and his murderer who was executed for the crime by The Maiden, which is the actual name of the guillotine they used.

Have you ever wondered what the Gospel text read at Mass really meant to Jesus and his followers?

For quite a long time, I have been searching for a resource which offers an exegesis of the literal sense of the Gospel text. In simple English, I want to know the meaning of the text as Jesus would have understood it and how it relates to me in the 21st century.

I have found a podcast, 'Daily Gospel Exegesis' – it follows the Catholic lectionary and it gives an in-depth study of the Gospel reading of the day. The podcasts last about 15-20 minutes, so it is manageable as a route into prayer or even to listen to on the drive to/from work.

To give an example, I thought I would highlight the exegesis of the **Gospel for Monday 21 October 2024: Luke 12:13-21, The Rich Fool**.

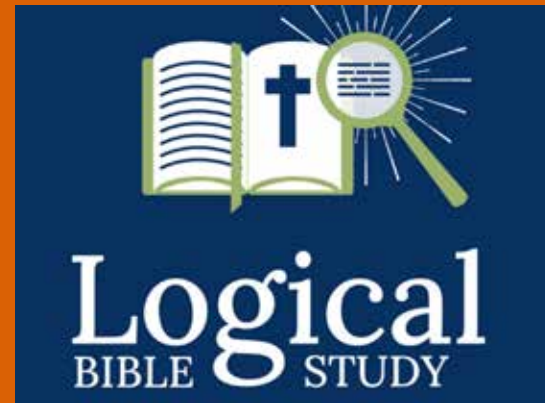
The story of the Rich Fool is one of Jesus' more straightforward parables, with a simple message – the material wealth we stockpile during our lives will have no use in the afterlife. However, there is quite a lot more going on in this text. My lack of understanding of the Old Testament, how the Bible is translated and common imagery used at the time, all serve to obscure the literal sense of this passage and the richness of Jesus' message quite literally goes over my head.

The teaching begins with a man in the crowd who shouts out to Jesus, asking Jesus to help him to get his share of the family inheritance. Strangely, to a modern audience, Jesus then uses the phrase, 'who appointed me your judge?' Scholars highlight that this echoes the Israelites in Exodus 2:14, when they questioned Moses, 'who made you ruler and judge over us?' Later in Acts 7, Stephen uses the same phrase and this is Luke's way of emphasising that, just as the Israelites rejected Moses as their appointed leader, so Jesus, who is the true leader, will be rejected.

Jesus then moves on to the parable of the Rich Fool, which focuses on the dangers of materialism. The fictional character, the rich fool, has more than enough, so he plans to store all his worldly goods and he will then 'eat, drink and be merry.' When I think of this phrase, it conjures up the

Have you ever wondered?

Alison McGarr poses the question – and gives an answer.



Christmas feast, a time of celebration and joy. However, that is not how Jesus would have understood this expression. It is commonly used in the Old Testament – Tobit 7:9, Ecclesiastes 8:15 and Isaiah 22:13 – to imply profligacy and self-indulgence. Luke's audience would have understood this as a negative description of a man inclined to be wasteful. God responds by calling the man, 'fool!' and this is interesting because as readers at that time would have known, 'fool' is a word used to describe someone who is not devoted to and reliant on God, for example in Psalm 14:1, 'The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."' Again, this is a subtlety that I would have missed, as for a modern reader a fool is a clown, a jester, a laughingstock.

So, we come to the key message of this passage:

'Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul: and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?' (Luke 12:20)

This is another unusual turn of phrase to convey the message that 'tonight you will die, and you will be judged.' For Luke's audience, the word 'demand' would usually be used in relation to a financial debt. In using

this phrase, Jesus is telling us that our lives are on loan, we will die and we will be expected to give an account of our actions. The material things we hoard will have no use after death. This does not mean that Jesus is telling us we cannot be rich, but that we must be generous with our wealth and give our time to God. Interestingly, Jesus' use of the imagery of storing up treasure is not a coincidence; it deliberately links to Joseph in Genesis 41:49, who amassed surplus grain to give away generously later. We are being told to do the same.

If applicable, the podcast ends with a link to the CCC and in this instance it refers to paragraph 549, which states that Jesus came to 'free men from the greatest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons.' The message for the 21st century is clear: when we fall into the sin of greed and avarice, we are stopped from being truly connected with God.

I have found the exegeses from the podcast to be interesting and they have enriched my reading of the Gospel – I hope you will find them useful too! The podcast is free but if you would like to support the ministry and access extra content, there is a link on the site <https://www.patreon.com/logicalbiblestudy>.

Here's a list of the parish groups and activities at St Peter's

Celebrating liturgy

Altar linen
Parish office: 0161 483 3476

Altar servers
Elaine Rhodes: 07973 943238
ellie.r.28@icloud.com

Church cleaners
Margaret King: 0161 483 4584

Eucharistic ministers
Parish office: 0161 483 3476

Flower arrangers
Colette Christie: 07714 470854
colette.christie4982@hotmail.co.uk

Lay-led liturgy
Rachel McKay: 0161 487 1659
mckay7897@hotmail.com

Adult and junior choirs
Eileen Rigg: 01625 872948
emrigg@hotmail.co.uk

Folk group
Steph Leyden: 0161 456 6285
stephleyden@icloud.com

Piety stall
Parish office: 0161 483 3476

Readers
Parish office: 0161 483 3476

Welcomers/stewarding
Parish office: 0161 483 3476

Creating social activity

Book club
Alison McGarr: 07792 107152
ajmcgarr68@outlook.com

Men's group
John McKay:
07715 362403

Parish newsletter
Parish office: 0161 483 3476

Parish noticeboards
juliewilliams10@gmail.com

Parish website
Anne-Marie Bailey:
ambailey@cheerful.com

Special events
Helen Lyons: 07854 928072
helenlyons1957@hotmail.co.uk

Tea and Coffees, after Mass
Rachel McKay: 0161 487 1659
mckay7897@hotmail.com

Theatre group
Tony Martin: 0161 483 7720
tony.martin@ntlworld.com

Walking group
Tony Martin: 0161 483 7720
tony.martin@ntlworld.com

Exploring faith

Alpha and Sycamore programmes
Rachel McKay: 0161 487 1659
mckay7897@hotmail.com

Baptism programme
Anne-Marie Gallogly
Karen Haines - justasec55@hotmail.com

Confirmation programme
Fr Peter
petersharrocks@stpetershazelgrove.org.uk

First sacraments preparation
Teresa Thiele: 07778 848709
terrythiele@hotmail.co.uk

Marriage preparation
Fr Peter

RCIA - Enquirers group
Tony Martin 0161 483 7720
tony.martin@ntlworld.com

Vocations
Fr Peter

Email address for
the parish office is
admin@stpetershazelgrove.org.uk

Names and contact
details are correct at
the time the magazine
went to print, but are
subject to change.

Sharing faith

Centering prayer
Mike O'Malley: 0161 483 8296
michaeldomalley@sky.com

Footsteps
Anne-Marie Bailey: 0161 456 2213
footsteps2020@mail.com

Guided prayer
Mike O'Malley: 0161 483 8296
michaeldomalley@sky.com

Holy hour and prayer ministry
Laura Small: 01625 876 752
lauramsmall@hotmail.com

Mothers' prayers
Teresa Thiele: 07778 848709
terrythiele@hotmail.co.uk

Rosary groups: adult and children
Laura Small: 01625 876 752
lauramsmall@hotmail.com

Scripture group
Mike O'Malley: 0161 483 8296
michaeldomalley@sky.com

Supporting families and youth

Bereavement support
Helen Lyons: 07854 928072

TOAST (Time On A Sunday Together) Children's liturgy
Teresa Thiele: 07778 848709
terrythiele@hotmail.co.uk

Little fishes
Anne Wroe: 07763 387001
anne.wroe@sky.com

Marriage and family life group
David Small: 01625 876 752

SPY (St Peter's Youth) group
David Small: 01625 876 752

Outreaching in the community

Disability Inclusion group
Maura Beesley
inclusionstpeters@gmail.com

Hospital chaplaincy
Chaplaincy Office: 0161 419 5889

Hospital Chaplaincy (Emergency)
Hospital switchboard will bleep
0161 483 1010

Via St Peter's
0161 483 3476
petersharrocks@stpeterhazelgrove.org.uk

LAMBS disco group
Kath Coll: 07592 755980
Brenda Martin: 0161 483 7720
brenmart46@gmail.com

Lenten lunches
Helen Lyons: 07854 928072
Jackie Mackay: 0161 483 6348

Missio
Margaret King: 0161 483 4584
Fiona Preece: 0161 456 4319

Schools chaplaincy
St Peter's
Fr P Sharrocks: 0161 483 2431
0161 483 3476

St Simon's
Fr P Sharrocks: 0161 483 9696
0161 483 3476

St James' High School - Via School
0161 482 6900, office@stjamesche.org.uk

Harrytown High School - Via School
0161 430 5277
office@harrytown.stockport.sch.uk

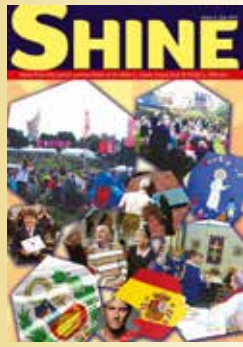
Aquinas 6th form college
0161 483 3237
Carmel.Scanlon@aquinas.ac.uk

St Peter's Helpers
stpetershelpers@gmail.com
0161 483 3476

St Peter's Refugee Project
Alison McGarr: 07792 107152
ajmcgarr68@outlook.com



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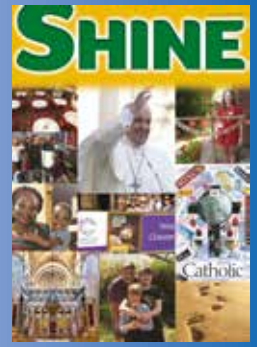
Issue 2, July 2017



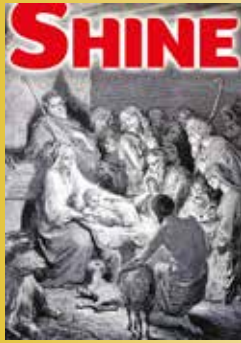
Issue 3, December 2017



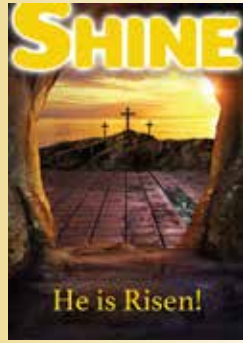
Issue 4, April 2018



Issue 5, September 2018



Issue 6, December 2018



Issue 7, April 2019



Issue 8, September 2019



Issue 9, December 2019



Issue 10, May 2020



Issue 11, December 2020



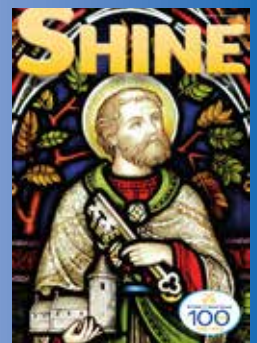
Issue 12, June 2021



Issue 13, July 2022



Issue 14, December 2022



Issue 15, September 2023



Issue 16, April 2024



Issue 17, April 2024

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Shine on our website:
www.stpeterscatholic.church.
They're currently at the bottom of the home page.