

Parishes of St John XXIII & St Joseph, Birtley



Incorporating: **Our Blessed Lady Immaculate**, Washington;
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Penshaw; **St Bede**, Usworth;
St John Boste, Oxclose; **St Joseph**, Birtley
 Fr Martin Morris, Parish Priest, Tel: 0191 4163583
 Email: StJohn23rd@diocesehn.org.uk
 Parish Website: <https://www.washingtoncatholic.org.uk>
 Parish Secretary: Anne Ridley 0191 4163583
 Office Hours: Tuesday 9am - 2:30pm (Penshaw),
 Wednesday & Thursday 9am - 2:30pm (Washington Village)



In the Partnership of Benedict

Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Penshaw, Sacriston, Washington

THE TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, 22ND – 23RD AUGUST 2026 Year A

Saturday 22nd August	St Joseph	5pm	People of the Parish
Vigil	St Bede	5pm	Antony Bark (Barky) RIP Recently Deceased
Sunday 23rd August	St John Boste	9:30am	Vera and John Frazer RIP
21st Sunday in Ordinary Time	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	People of the Parish
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am	Dorothy Sweeney RIP

First reading: The Master of the Palace
Isaiah 22:15, 19-23

Thus says the Lord God of hosts, 'Come, o to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him: "I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station. In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honour to his father's house." '

Response to the Psalm: O Lord, your merciful love is eternal; discard not the work of your hands.

Second Reading: God's Wisdom and Knowledge
Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia. You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Alleluia.

The Gospel: Jesus Claims Peter as Rock
Matthew 16:13-20

At that time: When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Fr Martin Morris	0191 416 3583	Deacon Frank O'Neill	0779 115 5845
Fr Martin Wheaton	0770 996 1040	Deacon Tony Joy	0779 989 3419
Fr Luke Wilkinson	0191 649 8257		

Mass Times & Intentions - Week Beginning Monday 24th August 2026 (Streamed Mass *)

Day	Church	Time	
Monday 24th August St Batholomew	St Bede	10am	Pauline Bennett RIP
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	7pm*	Susan Foster RIP
Tuesday 25th August Ss Louis & Joseph Calasanz	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Margaret and Edward Clark RIP
	St Joseph	7pm	Billy Gaff RIP (SVP)
Wednesday 26th August St Ninian	St Bede	10am	Cath Beavers RIP
	St John Boste	7pm	John Kelly RIP
Thursday 27th August St Monica	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am*	Tom Davidson
	St Joseph	12 Noon	Lilian Fletcher RIP (SVP)
Friday 28th August St Augustine	St Joseph	10am	Joan Taylor RIP
	St John Boste	10am*	Hugh McHugh
Saturday 29th August The Beheading of St John the Baptist	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	10am*	Gerard McCabe RIP
Vigil	St Joseph	5pm	Mary Sheilds RIP
	St Bede	5pm	Michael Gates
Sunday 30th August 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time	St John Boste	9:30am	John Cassidy
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	10am	Audrey McNay RIP
	Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	11am*	People of the Parish

LATELY DEAD: Sheila Tweedy and Joyce O'Brien.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.

Today's gospel has had a profound impact on the lives of Christians and of the church since the very beginning. The conversation between Jesus and Simon (Peter) witnesses the establishment of the first Pope (incidentally, Leo is the 267th successor of Peter) and lays the foundation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation which has brought peace and healing to countless people over the years - *"whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven."*

It is well known that Peter was far from being the ideal disciple of Jesus - his behaviour in the gospels left much to be desired: his over-confident boasting, his resistance to foot-washing at the Last Supper, his rebuke from Jesus for opposing the cross, he sinks when walking to Jesus on the water, he sleeps in Gethsemane when Jesus is going through his darkest hour and, worst of all, he denies three times that he even knows Jesus. Was Peter really the best candidate out of all the apostles? By modern-day standards (apart from Judas), he would have been least likely to have got the job of leader. Why would Jesus choose such a flawed character to lead the early church?

Well, maybe there's a clue in today's second reading: *"Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!"* As we have come to learn over many years, often God's wisdom goes beyond our human understanding. Jesus saw potential in Peter, he saw beyond his mistakes and weaknesses and when he asked Peter, *"Who do you say that I am?"*, he saw in his response a sign of change, of growth in maturity - his true potential starting to be realised - *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Like with Peter, Jesus sees our potential. He sees beyond our weaknesses and our failings and he offers us the chance to grow in maturity in living out our lives as his followers. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is such a great gift to us - no sin is beyond the reach of God's love and mercy.

So, if ever you feel that you're unworthy and you can't see a way forward out of something that binds you or holds you back, then know that you're in good company along with the rest of us. Psalm 50 tells us that God *"will not spurn a humble and contrite heart"*.

Today let us thank God for the example of St Peter and for the gift of God's forgiveness and healing through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Deacon Frank O'Neill

Masses are generally live-streamed daily at 10am every day, except Monday, streamed at 7pm, and alternate Sundays when Mass is live-streamed at either 10am or 11am. An * on the Mass table indicates streamed Masses.

Please [click here](#) to view from one of our Churches

What's On in the Parish

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

Our Lady Queen of Peace each Friday 2pm - 3pm

St Joseph each Thursday evening 6.30pm - 7.30pm

I do encourage as many of you as possible to spend some time in quiet prayer with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration. Fr Martin Morris.

OLOF (Our Lady's Over 50's club), No meeting this week.

Fr Luke New Appointment - The Bishop has asked me to take up a new appointment in the diocese. I will be moving to St Dominic's Newcastle to join the City Centre Clergy and taking up the role of Chaplain to Newcastle and Northumbria Universities. The 22nd/23rd August will be my last weekend in the parish and I'd really like you to join me for Mass on the 22nd at 10am at OBLI to say goodbye with refreshments afterwards. Fr Luke.

Safeguarding - Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is a priority in every parish and diocesan organisation. The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle is fully committed in the church and operates a zero-tolerance approach. The safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is at the heart of the Church's mission. We adopt and implement fully the policies and procedures of the Catholic Church of England and Wales, which is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church. To discuss any safeguarding concerns please contact a safeguarding officer in any of our churches – their details are on the noticeboard in the porch. Details of our Diocesan policy can be found by [clicking here](#).

Special BBC Songs of Praise Christmas Concert to be recorded at the spectacular Glasshouse International Centre for Music in Gateshead on Tuesday 6th October.

Join Aled Jones and some very special guests at the iconic Glasshouse for a spectacular Christmas concert. Bring your singing voice and Christmas jumper for an evening of classic carols and traditional hymns. For free tickets book [here](#) or [email](#) or telephone 020 8530 8154.

Parish 'LIFE' Group. - We are hoping to begin a 'LIFE' Group in the Parish soon. The group will work closely with the project of The Guild of Our Lady of Good Counsel network, in supporting Mothers and Expectant Mothers with housing, feeding, and other practical difficulties. They will also promote the Annual day for Life, and the January 'white flower appeal'. A short meeting will be held in the office at Our Lady's after 10am Mass on Saturday 26th September for any parishioner who may wish to know more. All welcome.



The Parish of St John XXIII has a dedicated YouTube channel. Here you can watch live streams of Masses. These are indicated by an asterisk next to the Mass times on pages one and two. You can also see recordings of past Masses and Gospel Homilies. The channel can be accessed [here](#).

Please contact your MP to oppose assisted suicide

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill is back in the House of Commons and seeks to legalise assisted suicide. It will have its Second Reading and vote on Friday, 11th September 2026. Please write to your MP to make your voice heard and oppose the Bill. "This bill is wrong in principle," says Archbishop Richard Moth, President of the Bishops' Conference, "It is also deeply flawed and, if passed, could lead to vulnerable people feeling pressured into ending their lives. The Bill has a serious lack of protection for health and social care staff and risks putting many wonderful hospices and care homes in the position of no longer being able to operate. I urge you to write to your Members of Parliament to petition them to vote against the Bill at Second Reading."

You can support the Archbishop's call and contact your MP now as a matter of urgency. Even if you have already done so in the past, please speak up and voice your opposition. The charity Right to Life UK has a simple online mechanism to do this. It takes little more than a few minutes to enter your postcode, make sure the suggested text suits your viewpoint and submit your message to ask your MP to stop this flawed Bill progressing through parliament. Thankyou, Fr. Martin Morris.

For more information and resources, visit:

cbcew.org.uk/opposing-assisted-suicide
righttolife.org.uk/Sept11vote

Only 12 MPs need to switch for the Bill to be defeated. Some MPs have already indicated that they may now vote against it, giving us real grounds for hope.

MPs have told us that face-to-face meetings with constituents can make a significant difference to how they vote. A meeting with a parishioner could therefore help change an MP's mind.

We are therefore asking people across the country to meet their MP and urge them to vote against the Bill. To make this as easy as possible, we are launching a [tool](#) that lets them request a meeting in just 30 seconds. It also gives them everything they need to prepare, including a short video guide featuring Miriam Cates and our Director of Public Affairs, with practical advice on making the strongest possible case against the Bill.

Stand with Palestinian families: Write to the Trade Secretary today.

The suffering in the Holy Land has gone on for far too long. One of the greatest obstacles to building peace is the ongoing expansion of illegal settlements across occupied Palestinian territory. As settlements expand, Palestinian families are driven from their homes, often amid repeated violent attacks, and are forced to watch while settlers take over. The result is widespread poverty and suffering. That is why we are calling on the trade secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, to ban trade with settlements, including ending the import of produce grown on illegally occupied land. Write to the Traded Secretary [here](#).

CONFESSIONS	
Church	Time
Our Lady Queen of Peace	Thursday after 10am Mass
St Joseph	Thursday after Noon Mass
St John Boste	Friday after 10am Mass
Our Blessed Lady Immaculate	Saturday after 10am Mass
St Bede	Saturday after 5pm Mass

Pastoral Strategy - In our latest Pastoral Strategy video message, **Bishop Stephen** reminds us that "we are all called to be the Lord's Missionary Disciples." Over the summer and into autumn, Bishop Stephen and others will be reflecting and responding to the discernments locally submitted. During this time we are asked to keep the process in our prayers and also to continue to witness what the Lord is calling us to be and do. To watch the video please [click here](#).

Other News

Special Collection Update - During Advent 2025 and Lent 2026, **St Cuthbert's Care** invited parishes across our Diocese to support their new service, **Fresh Start**, which aims to provide safe accommodation for women experiencing homelessness, many of whom have faced challenges linked to the justice system or substance misuse, supporting them to rebuild their lives with dignity and stability. Thanks to the generosity of parish communities, an incredible **£26,500** has been raised, which will go directly to supporting this vital service. Rooted firmly in Catholic values, the project responds to a clear gap in provision, offering hope where there is currently no statutory funding. Anticipated annual running costs are around £300,000, making the ongoing support of parish communities more important than ever. *Thank you for your support – together we can make a real difference.* More information [here](#).

Minsteracres - The Medjugorje Centre (North East) has organised a retreat from Friday 9th - Sunday 11th October. **Fr Martin Morris** will be leading the retreat. It is open to anyone from our diocese and beyond, who supports or is interested in Medjugorje. The cost is £205 per person. A £50 Deposit is required and booking forms are available from Marian Fletcher - Telephone 0191 4174413.

For information about Medjugorje see - <https://www.medjugorje.hr/en/>

The **God Who Speaks** project encourages us to deepen our love of the Bible and to find creative ways to encounter Christ in the Scriptures, that we may bear witness to the Word in the world. The August theme is: [Sunlight in Scripture](#) What does the Bible say about the sun? Why is the sun central to creation and our spiritual growth? Also [Rest and Recreation](#) Even God rests. What does Scripture say about the need for rest and recreation? There is also a celebration of the role [Our Lady](#) plays in Scripture and in our faith ahead of the Feast of the Assumption on 15th August. For more information please [click here](#).

Godly Play Core Training Course - Godly Play UK is a Christian movement centred on childhood spirituality. It recognises childhood spirituality as an instinctive and profound capacity that includes a natural sense of God's mystery and presence and offers training, advice and support for those who use the Godly Play method to transform thinking and practice for the whole of life. A three-day introductory and training session is taking place at St Gabriel's Church in Heaton this October. For more information please [click here](#).

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. We are just over a month away from the first of our two SPUC Day Conferences, and I'm pleased to say we have four fantastic speakers confirmed (two at each Conference)! In London we will be joined by Bernadette Smyth and Sarah Morse. And in Glasgow, we will be joined by Sara Spencer and John Mason. To find out more about these speakers, and to book your place at one of the Conferences, click the link [here](#).

Life in the Spirit Seminar Series: Harlow Green - 24th September 2026—12th November 2026. Join us for this opportunity to experience the new life we are promised through baptism in the Holy Spirit. Life in the Spirit seminars are being run by the Diocesan CHARIS group and you will be very welcome to attend. Many who have attended previous seminars have spoken of how it has given their faith a real boost and helped them experience God's love in tangible ways. **Venue:** St Anne, Rokeby View, Harlow Green, Gateshead, NE9 7UD. **Cost:** Free. **Time:** 7pm to 8.30pm. **Dates and Titles of Sessions:** **24th September 2026:** Introduction, **1st October 2026:** God's Love – Andy Drozdziak, **8th October 2026:** Salvation – Fr Anthony Ohaekwusi, **22nd October 2026:** The New Life – Christine Dixon, **29th October 2026:** Receiving God's Gifts – Fr Chris Warren, **5th November 2026:** Baptism in the Holy Spirit – Fr Shaun O'Neill, **12th November 2026:** Growth – Nikki Dickenson, **19th November 2026:** Transformation in Christ – John Wheeler. Please book your place [here](#).

Reflections

Diocesan Weekly reflections can be found by [clicking here](#).

Examen - Please follow the links to go to Pray as You Go [Pray as you go](#)

Catholic Social Teaching

For the Newsletter, [click here](#).

Prayers - If you would like to request prayers from the parish community for someone who is sick, or recently deceased, please click on the links below and complete the necessary forms. This will enable their names to be included in private prayer and during various Masses.

[For Prayers for the Sick](#)
[For Prayers for the Deceased](#)

or ring 0191 4163583

To view the sick and recently deceased list [please click here](#). To amend the information on the list [click here](#).

Finance - Standing Order forms and Gift Aid forms are available by clicking on the following links:

[For St John XXIII](#) [For St Joseph's](#)

or ring 0191 4163583.

Baptism - To request a Baptism, you can download the form by [clicking here](#) or ring 07552 733540.

Parish Newsletter If you wish to request an electronic version of the Parish Newsletter, [please click here](#).

For the latest information, please go to any of the following Websites:

[Parish of St John XXIII](#)
[Parish of St Joseph's](#)
[Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle](#)

All the Links you will ever need!

Please [click here](#) or Scan the QR Code with your mobile phone to go to a site containing **All the Links You'll Ever Need.**



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