



THE PARISH OF SAINT MARY, HALIFAX

Incorporating the churches of St Alban and St Mary

Parish Priest: Rev. Fr Joshua Hilton
 Deacons: Rev. John Walsh, Rev. Paul Coates
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MASS SCHEDULE AND DEVOTIONS

Children's Liturgy:
 Every Sunday 11:00am

Perpetual Novena:
 Wednesday after 9:30am
 Mass

Holy Rosary:
 Saturday after 12:15pm
 Mass

Devotions to the Sacred Heart:
 First Friday of the month
 after 9:30am Mass

Our Lady's Lamp this week burns for:
 Trish Farr-Cox (Sick)



Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:

Saturday 11:00am – 12:00pm
 at St Mary's

Confessions:

Saturday
 11:00am-12:00pm
 at St Mary's

Sunday
 5:30pm-6:00pm
 at St Alban's
 or on Request

Marriages and Baptisms
 by appointment
 See the priest after Mass

The month of February is dedicated to: The Holy Family

SUNDAY 1 st FEBRUARY 2026	4 th Sunday in Ordinary Time	9:30am 11:00am 6:00pm	St Mary's St Mary's St Alban's	Denis Smyth Josie McLaughlin People of the Parish
MONDAY 2 nd	Candlemass (The Presentation)	9:30am	St Mary's	Bryan & Shelia Greenwood
TUESDAY 3 rd	St Blaise (<i>Blessing of throats</i>)	7:00pm	St Alban's	Mary Harding (YB)
WEDNESDAY 4 th	Feria	9:30am	St Mary's	Maria Griffin
THURSDAY 5 th	St Agatha	9:30am	St Alban's	David Carr
FRIDAY 6 th	St Pauk Miki & Martyrs of Japan	9:30am	St Mary's	Sidney Smith
SATURDAY 7 th	Feria	12:15pm 4:00pm	St Mary's St Mary's	Pauline Sutcliffe (Sick) Polish Mass

READERS ROTA

THIS SUNDAY		NEXT SUNDAY	
9:30am	Lily Hymas	9:30am	Nicholas Aigbogun
11:00am	Malcolm Brown	11:00am	Wendy Balahura
6:00pm	Frances Millington	6:00pm	Judith MacDonald

PRAYER LIST: Tony Hintze, Mary Staden, Peter Staden, Gerard James, David Sutcliffe, John Wallis, William Long, Julie Simpson, Charlotte Fitzpatrick, Peter Smith, Julie Hall, Sonya Box, Kathleen Hannan, Nancy McGrath, Eleanor Foran, Rita Baxendale, Michael McDonnell and all the sick and housebound of the parish, their families and those who care for them. If you know of anyone in the parish who is ill or is housebound please let Fr Hilton or Deacon John know so that a visit can be arranged.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

Amy Lawrence who has died recently and for all those whose anniversaries occur around this time.

MASSES RECEIVED

Nicholas Wannan, Kevin Brook, Pauline Sutcliffe, Peggy Ripley, Diamon Wedding Thanksgiving

WELCOME AND THANK YOU

To Fr Royston Price CSsR, who has very kindly offered to say the Masses in the parish this weekend. You may remember Fr Price from our parish mission that he preached with Fr Hemer a couple of years ago. He is back in the diocese for the tour of the relics of St Gerard Majella and will be staying here in the presbytery at St Mary's. I'm very grateful for his kindness, please make him welcome.

CANDLEMASS MONDAY MORNING

There will be a special Mass with the blessing of candles and procession at 9:30am on Monday

YEAR OF CATECHESIS

The next in our series of talks will be on **Tuesday 10th of February at 6:00pm** in St Alban's Hall and will be given by my brother Fr Benjamin Hilton. He will be speaking about

The Communion of the Saints.

*** The next Q&A will take place on the **Tuesday 24th March at 6:00pm**. ***

Please take note of this revised date.

COACH TRIP TO LINCOLN

The next coach trip will be on **Thursday 12th March** to the medieval city of Lincoln. We will celebrate Mass before we **leave at 9:00am** from St Mary's. The trip costs £35 per person and includes admission and a guided tour of Lincoln Cathedral – a truly magnificent building. The Cathedral became the tallest building in the world in AD 1311, the title previously being held by the Great Pyramid of Giza built in 2600 BC. It was only surpassed in 1548 by the tower of St. Mary's Church, Stralsund. As usual there will be free time for lunch and exploring the city and we will depart on our return journey at 4:00pm.

Register interest on the sign-up sheet at the back of church as usual.

DIOCESE OF LEEDS YOUNG MEN'S GROUP FOR AGES 21-35

The diocese is forming a group for young men from across our parishes to come together to pray, listen to engaging speakers, socialise and grow in faith and fraternity. The group is under the patronage of St Joseph and takes the following format: Devotions to St Joseph, talk from a guest speaker, food and social time and concludes with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The next meeting will be on:

Thursday 26th February 6:30pm – 8:30pm at Hinsley Hall, the diocesan center, in Leeds, LS6 2BX

FIRST CONFESSION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION 2026

First Confessions will take place on Saturday **21st of March** for children in Year 3. First Holy Communion will take place on Sunday **7th of June** for children in Year 4.

If your child attends a non-Catholic school and wishes to make either of these Sacraments this year, please let me know as soon as possible. Or contact Helen Mellor on 07931998337.

ELLA THE DOG

Ella is the Therapy and Support Dog who comes to the 11:00am Mass. Ella does marvellous work in hospitals schools, including our own St Mary's, hospices and other care settings. She comes to church with my express permission and is not a bit of bother.

RECENT FINANCIAL NEWS

Last week's loose collection was **£693.66** Total Approx: **£1407.41** (Inc. standing orders & card)
Please consider remembering the parish in your will.

FROM YOUR PARISH PRIEST

This week the Church remembers St Paul Miki and his companions, the martyrs of Japan. Their story is not especially well known and yet it is one of the most striking witnesses to Catholic faith in the face of fear and extreme violence. Christianity arrived in Japan in the sixteenth century, brought by missionaries who were initially welcomed. For a time, the faith grew quickly. Communities formed, catechists were trained and local vocations emerged. Paul Miki himself was Japanese by birth, educated by the Jesuits and became a gifted preacher. He knew his culture well, spoke clearly and could explain the faith in a way his own people understood.

Over time, however, political attitudes changed. Christianity began to be seen as a threat, not because it encouraged rebellion but because it taught allegiance to a truth greater than the state. The authorities feared a faith that could not be fully controlled and as always, persecution followed. In 1597, Paul Miki and twenty-five others were arrested. Some were priests, some were religious and some were laypeople. They included young and old, missionaries and local Catholics. They were forced to march hundreds of miles to Nagasaki, where they were crucified on a hillside overlooking the city.

What is most striking is not simply the brutality of their deaths but the calm clarity of their faith. Paul Miki preached a sermon from the cross as he was dying. He did not curse his executioners or plead for his life. He spoke instead of forgiveness, of Christ and of eternal life. His final witness was not dramatic defiance but peaceful conviction. The martyrs of Japan remind us that faith is not always tested by sudden crisis. More often than not, it is tested by pressure. Pressure to be quiet. Pressure to blend in. Pressure to treat faith as something private and optional rather than something that shapes how we live. The martyrs of Japan refused to treat faith as a cultural accessory. For them, Christ was not an idea or a philosophy. He was Lord. That conviction cost them everything.

It is always easy to think that the stories of the martyrs belong to another time and another place. Yet the questions they raise are still very much alive. What happens when faith becomes inconvenient? What do we do when Christian belief sits uneasily with the values around us? Do we quietly step back, or do we remain faithful, even when it costs us something? Most of us, God willing, will never face the kind of persecution that St Paul Miki and his companions endured. But we are not exempt from challenge. Faith today is often questioned, marginalised and misunderstood. Catholic teaching on life, dignity, forgiveness and truth can be dismissed as outdated or even harmful. In subtle ways we are encouraged to keep quiet.

When the persecution in Japan intensified, Christianity was driven underground and yet it survived. Hidden communities continued to baptise, to pray and to pass on the faith quietly from one generation to the next. There was not a priest on the islands for a hundred years and yet, the blood of the martyrs did not destroy the Church. It sustained it. In 1865 French missionaries arrived astonished to find secret communities of baptised Japanese Catholics who had never seen the Holy Mass but knew exactly what it was and begged them to celebrate it for them.

The feast of St Paul Miki and the Martyrs of Japan invite us to examine our own faith. Not with shame but with honesty. Where are we tempted to compromise? Where do we find it hard to speak or to live as Christians? And where might God be asking us simply to remain faithful?

God bless you all,
Fr Hilton

Mass Offerings, Notices and News Items for the Parish Bulletin should be given to Fr Hilton or Deacon John by Wednesday evening. Notices and News can be sent again by Wednesday evening to office.stmary.halifax@dioceseofleeds.org.uk
The Parish Safeguarding Representative is Sharon Costello
Leeds Diocese Charity Registration No. 249404