

# St Mary of the Annunciation Catholic Church

GAUDETE SUNDAY  
(THIRD OF ADVENT)

# NEWSLETTER

## St Francis of Assisi and the Crib



**St Mary of the Annunciation  
Catholic Church**

97 Ashby Road  
Loughborough LE11 3AB  
01509 262123  
office@  
stmarysloughborough.org.uk  
*Served by the Rosminians*

**Parish Priest**

Fr Paul Gillham, IC

**On attachment**

Fr David Jones, OLW

**Safeguarding Rep**

Jane Monaghan

01509 262123

**Parish Catholic Schools**

**St Mary's Primary**

Hastings Street

Loughborough LE11 5AX

01509 212621

office@stmarys-rc.leics.sch.uk

**Headteacher:** Miss P Jordan

**De Lisle College**

Thorpe Hill

Loughborough LE11 4SQ

01509 268739

enquiries@delisle.leics.sch.uk

**Headteacher:** Mr C Maher

Today, as well as being 'Gaudete' Sunday is also 'Bambinelli' Sunday when it has become traditional to bless the figure of the Baby JESUS for your cribs at home. This tradition was begun by Pope **St John Paul II** when the children and adults would bring their Baby JESUS figures to be blessed by the Pope in St Peter's Square on the Third Sunday of Advent, and it continues to this day.

The origin of the Christmas Crib is attributed to **St Francis of Assisi** (1181-1226). He had recently been in the Holy Land where he had visited the traditional birthplace of Our Lord. So he was inspired to recreate the scene in the woods of **Greccio** near Assisi, on Christmas Eve. St Francis had a friend by the name of Giovanni Velitta to whom he said, "*If you desire that we should celebrate this year's Christmas together at Greccio, go quickly and prepare what I tell you; for I want to enact the memory of the Infant who was born at Bethlehem and how He was bedded in the manger on hay between a donkey and an ox. I want to see all of this with my own eyes.*" Giovanni did exactly as Francis asked. Hay was brought in and even the ox and the donkey! Then all the villagers came with lighted candles and torches and sang hymns. Holy Mass was celebrated at which Francis, who was a Deacon, solemnly chanted the Gospel and preached, where he "*spoke charming words concerning the birth of the poor King, and the little town of Bethlehem*". It is recorded that after Mass, Francis went to the crib and stretched out his arms as though the Baby JESUS was there, and that the Babe appeared and the empty manger was filled with the radiance of the new-born King.

St Francis, by creating the crib, wanted to show us what God had done for us and how poor He became for us. Our Lord was not a Divine Person hiding behind the facade of a human being. He truly became one of us and "*emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men*" (Philippians 2:7). In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "*His poverty enriches those who embrace it and Christmas brings joy and peace to those who, like the shepherds in Bethlehem, accept the Angel's words: 'Let this be a sign to you: in a manger you will find an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes'* (Luke 2: 12). *This is still the sign for us too, men and women of the third millennium. There is no other Christmas*".

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## MASS INTENTIONS AT ST MARY'S

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**Sat 16th Vigil Mass**  
 6.00pm Family Intention

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**Sun 17th Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)**  
 9.00am Evelyn Woodhouse (RIP)  
 11.15am For the Parish  
 4.00pm **Italian Mass**

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**Mon 18th Advent Feria**  
 9.15am Anthony Richard Hutchings (RIP)

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**Tues 19th Advent Feria**  
 9.15am Intention for the living

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**Weds 20th Ember Wednesday of Advent**  
 6.00-6.25pm *Parish Rosary*  
 6.30pm Bozena Siwek (RIP) (Latin)

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**Thurs 21st Advent Feria**  
 9.15am Cliff Brookes (RIP)  
 4.00pm *Baptism*

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**Fri 22nd Advent Feria**  
 6.00-6.25pm *Confessions*  
 6.30pm Intention for the living

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**Sat 23rd Advent Feria**  
 10.00am Fr Bernard Nann, IC (RIP) **NO PUBLIC MASS**  
 10.30am *Private prayer with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*  
 -12.30pm *with Confessions 10.30-11.30am & Benediction 12.20pm*  
 6.00pm **Vigil Mass:** Vivincia Castillo (RIP, Anniversary)

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**Sun 24th Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
 9.00am For the Parish  
 11.15am Wladyslaw Moson (RIP)

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**Sun 24th Vigil Mass of Christmas (Solemnity)**  
 6.00pm Henryka & Piotr Abucewicz (RIP)  
 11.30pm *Carols*

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**Mon 25th Nativity of the Lord (Solemnity)**  
 12.00am Midnight Mass: Andy Newbold (RIP)  
 10.30am Derek Whymark (RIP)

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Please pray for those who are sick

for those who have recently died  
 Mary Nash  
 Liam Sloan  
*May they rest in peace*

and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time

Veronica Burton  
 Carmel Berridge  
 Peter Robinson  
 Brian Stack  
 Russell Lomotos  
 Dorothy Ginns  
 Margaret Dawson  
 Mary Black  
 Denise Carnell  
 Christopher Hubbard  
 Giuseppe Calardo  
 John McGeechan  
 Giovanni Brunette  
 Liz Prentice  
 John Moore

### PLEASE NOTE

Due to government regulations regarding personal data (UK-GDPR), we are not able to publish name details of Mass intentions for the living in this online version of the newsletter.

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So may our cribs at home help us to come to a much deeper understanding of God's great humility and what He has done for us. And let us ask Our Lady to help us enter into the true spirit of Christmas, the coming of the God Man into our world and into our lives.

*Fr Paul Gillham, IC*

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**Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve:** With Christmas Day falling on a Monday this year, it means the Fourth Sunday of Advent and the Vigil Mass of Christmas fall on the same day. The 6pm Vigil Mass on Sunday 24th fulfils your Christmas obligation but not that of the Sunday. This means you ought to attend one of the Masses of the Fourth Sunday of Advent in addition to one of the Masses of Christmas, which is a **Holyday of Obligation**. You can't kill two birds with one stone!

*Fr Paul*

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**Last week's Carol Service:** Many thanks to Martins, Noel and all our choristers who gave us a most excellent Carol Service last Sunday evening. The choir is going from strength to strength and their dedication and commitment was evident for all to see. It's also wonderful that we have so many young singers with their youthful enthusiasm! We hope to have an even bigger congregation next year.

*Fr Paul*

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**Christmas Appeal:** Please consider giving to SHARP (Shelter Housing Advice & Research Project (Leicester)) this Christmas. SHARP is the only local charity whose primary purpose is to prevent homelessness in Leicester and Leicestershire. They receive no government funding and rely very much on donations from individuals and organisations. To give online visit [www.leicestershelter.org.uk](http://www.leicestershelter.org.uk) or send a cheque to SHARP, 13 Welford Road, Leicester LE2 7AD. Thank you.

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**A reflection from Pope Francis for the Year of Prayer**

Very often it happens that we do not pray, we don't feel like praying, or many times we pray like parrots, with the mouth, but our heart is not in it. This is the moment to say to the Spirit: "Come, come Holy Spirit, warm my heart. Come and teach me to pray, teach me to look to the Father, to look to the Son. Teach what the path of faith is like. Teach me how to love and, above all, teach me to have an attitude of hope."

**Christmas Masses**

**Sunday 24th December**

6.00pm: Family Vigil Mass  
11.30pm: Carols

**Monday 25th December**

12.00am: Midnight Mass  
10.30am: Solemn Mass

**Fatima and the First Saturdays study groups**

The study group covers: the apparitions of the Angel of Peace; Our Lady's six appearances at Fatima; the three important appearances after Fatima; additional crucial information found in Sister Lucia's memoirs, letters, and locutions up to 1945; additional information up to the present time; how all of this content is related to the First Saturdays Devotion.

Next groups start the week of **14th-18th January 2024**. Meet on Zoom for an hour a week for 13 weeks. You can choose a time from various days and times. To register for the English Study Groups, go to: <https://www.communalfirstsaturdays.org/study-groups>.

**Deadline: 8th January 24**

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**Elivra Jephcott** has been appointed Property Manager for St Mary's.

## Prayer for vocations to the priesthood and religious life

**Leader:** Please kneel for our prayer for vocations. Let us ask God to give worthy Priests to His Holy Church and Brothers and Sisters to Religious Orders.

**All:** O God, we earnestly beseech You to bless this diocese with many priests, brothers and sisters, who will gladly spend their entire lives serving Your Church and making You known and loved.

**Leader:** Bless our families. Bless our children.

**All:** Choose from our homes those who are needed for Your work.

**Leader:** Mary, Queen of the Clergy!

**All:** Pray for us. Pray for our priests and religious. Obtain for us many more. Amen.

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## Prayer to Saint Michael

Holy Michael, the Archangel, defend us in the day of battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God thrust down to hell Satan and all the wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Amen.

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**The diocese is producing a monthly podcast for the Year of Prayer** called 'Encounter Prayer'. Each month a different type of prayer will be showcased; this first episode is given by Bishop Patrick who introduces the Year of Prayer, his hopes for it, and shares insights from his own prayer life. The Podcasts can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Amazon Music and Audible by searching Diocese of Nottingham; they are also on the diocesan website: [www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/yearofprayer](http://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/yearofprayer).

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## From the Saints

*"Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind Who is your Head and of Whose Body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God's Kingdom"*  
(Pope St Leo the Great, d.461)



**Please could all Missio box holders return their boxes to church before Christmas. Thank you.**

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**Sale of Christmas cakes and various other cakes: This Sunday** after the 9am and 11.15am Masses. The money raised will help pay for Mary and Lizzy Offiler-Russell to go to Lourdes.

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**Church Cleaning for Christmas: Friday 22nd December 11am-12.30pm.** Please come along to help prepare our church for Christmas. If you are able to help please see Emily. Thank you.

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**The Mayor's Civic Carol Service** will be held at All Saints Church, Loughborough on **Monday 18th December** at 7 pm. All are welcome to attend.

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## Last Week's Finance

**Collection:** £821 of which £138 was gift-aided

**Standing orders:** £722 @ 30/11, of which £650 was gift-aided

**Attendance:** 535

*Thank you*

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