

New Lectionary-Advent 2024- Taking donations for anyone who would like to contribute to this cost (£695). A label detailing the list of sponsors will be printed in the front of our new lectionary. **Thank you to those that have made very generous offers.** We have also had to purchase new mass books to reflect the changes, which we will be doing over a phased period, but this is at a cost of over £2000 in total so any donations really would be really appreciated.

Christmas Carols and Vigil Mass- Christmas Eve 6.00pm

We look forward to seeing as many parishioners, school children and families at our Caroll Service this year. Carols will be led by our wonderful choir but please come prepared to sing along! We thank involved in advance for what we know will be a beautiful evening and also for their service throughout the whole year. We thank all the readers that will be playing their part both during the carol service, the Vigil Mass and Christmas Day Mass as well as their service throughout the year. We talk so much about the Word of God, and at this time of year the Word made flesh, so the service you give week in week out is so vital to our parish.

May we all make the most of these last few days. The waiting is nearly over. Are we ready? Have we prepared? In advance of our Christmas celebrations Fr Mathew would like to wish all his parishioners a very Happy and Holy Christmas and every good wish for 2024.

Christmas Raffle- Thank you to everyone who bought tickets/donated prizes etc. A bid thankyou to Sarita and Bernie who organise this wonderful annual raffle. It is very much appreciated. Still time to get some tickets before the draw!

Reflection: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Mary Holds the Word

We are a days away from the Solemnity of Christmas, the image of the pregnant Mary is most applicable now as the time draws near for her to give birth to her Son.

Very soon Mary will see the Word made flesh. Birth is the end of pregnancy but Mary's relationship with the Word, her Son Jesus Christ, does not end.

Mary will hold him cradled in her arms. As the boy grows, she will hold him close. When she finds him in the Temple, she will hold him in relief. As he begins his ministry, she holds him in her heart. At his Passion and Death, Mary will take his lifeless body and hold him.

Through her life Mary holds on to the Word made flesh. As the season of Advent concludes and we begin the season of Christmas celebrating the Word made flesh, will you hold on to the Word? Will you hold on to Jesus as he grows in your life? Will you hold on to him as he reveals himself to you and teaches you? Will you hold on to him as he suffers with you?

Mary holds the Word; may her prayers help us to hold Jesus in our lives with love, with devotion and with adoration.

Make this your Christmas gift to yourself!- Confessions- Please see Fr if you would like him to hear your confession in readiness for Christmas: Authentic conversion begins with prayer, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son"(Luke 15:18-19)

We can't conjure up this kind sorrow or contrition which leads to conversion and change. It is truly a movement of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of Confession is the sacred space in which God's forgiveness and mercy is made real and present. God's mercy is limitless, deeper than the ocean, higher than the mountains, as far as the east is from the west. Bless me Father, for I have sinned, grant me pardon, peace and absolution in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Advent/Christmas Fundraising

CAFOD World Gifts- Please pick up a leaflet showing the wonderful gifts we can buy for someone in this country that benefits someone in another country- remember our World Gift Village from a few years ago? Maybe we could start a new village.

Christmas Bonus Ball draw. Please see Ailish if you would like to take a number.



Christmas Raffle: Sarita and Bernie have kindly agreed to organise our Christmas raffle again this year. Any donations of bottles, chocolates, small gifts would be very welcome. Please leave these on the back of church over the next few weeks. Raffle

tickets will be sold in the two weeks leading up to Christmas.





Parish of St. Gerard, Castle Vale
(Part of the Erdington Cluster which includes The Abbey, St Peter and St Paul's and St Mary and St John's)

part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham—Registered Charity No. 234216

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Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

Mass Times

Sunday 22nd December
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Confession 9.30am

Mass 10.00am for David
Bacchus RIP and James Pell-
Wallpole

Monday 23rd December

Mass 10.00am

Tuesday 24th December

Carols 6.00pm

Vigil Mass 6.30m

Wednesday 25th December

Christmas Day

Mass 10.00am

Thursday 26th December

Feast of St Stephen

Altar Servers Mass 10.00am

Friday 27th December

Mass 10.00am

Saturday 28th December

Mass 5.00pm

Sunday 29th December

Feast of the Holy Family

Confession 9.30am

Mass 10.00am



Christmas Mass Times

Christmas Eve: Carols

6.00pm followed by Vigil

6.30pm **Christmas Day:**

Mass 10.00am **St Stephens**

Day: Altar Servers Mass

Parish Mission Statement

We, the members of St Gerard's R.C. Church, are baptised in Jesus Christ, empowered by the spirit, nurtured in community, and nourished by prayer, word and sacrament. Therefore, for the greater glory of God, we proclaim for all people the saving message of the Gospel, and joyfully share our time, talent and resources, in works of mercy and justice, both within and beyond our parish community.

Advent is a time of preparation and joyful expectation. As we prepare for the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, these weeks provide a wonderful opportunity to slow down and reflect. We look forward to the coming of Christ: celebrating His birth, His renewed coming into our lives this Christmas, especially through the Eucharist, and His second coming at the end of time. Advent marks the start of the Church's liturgical year.

Advent comes from the Latin adventus, meaning 'arrival' or 'coming'. Each Gospel reading during Advent has a distinctive theme: the Lord's coming at the end of time (First Sunday of Advent), John the Baptist (Second and Third Sunday), and the events that prepared immediately for the Lord's birth (Fourth Sunday). A period to "Prepare and be ready, Watch and wait". We get impatient with God's plan. We wander. We choose our own plans instead. God is faithful though. He calls us to return to Him. God's plan is not about getting what we want. It is about God restoring the whole world to himself. In our lives we will experience events which we don't understand. There will be senseless tragedies and undeserved triumphs. We must be vigilant and ready for those, especially for trials and difficulties. There are always uncertainties in life. We must be ready at all times to serve Christ when we encounter the Lord in our daily lives. The four Sundays of Advent each have a specific theme or focus- Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.

As we light our fourth candle on our Advent Wreath, the candle of Peace, we remember that the word "enthusiasm" has its roots in a Greek word meaning, "God inspired" or "God within". Enthusiasm and joy are rich motifs of the Nativity Story. Mary sang "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour". Elizabeth proclaimed "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you shall bear". John the Baptist leapt with joy in his mother's womb. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men on whom his favour rests. The shepherds gave witness. "They spread the word concerning what they had been told about the child". The Magi brought gifts, bowed down and worshipped him.

Cathedral Carol Service- St Chad's Cathedral, Sunday 22 December 5pm- Please come along and listen to our magnificent cathedral singers under the direction of Professor David Saint sing a variety of Christmas Carols and motets interspersed with reading from the Scriptures. **No booking required. Refreshments in the Grimshaw Room afterwards.**

Recently died and those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Cornelius O'Regan RIP: Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.

The sick: George Harris, Sarah Purcell, Theresa Floyd, Pat Bonner, Kath McMullen, Margaret Ludlow, Rose Cogan, Andrew Trueman, Eileen Morrissey, Frances Irwin, George Irwin, Debbie Johnson and all the sick priests of the diocese. May the Lord grant them the healing they require.

Mass Intentions: on behalf of a family member, a friend or a deceased loved one, to remember a birthday or anniversary, envelopes are available at the back of church or email Fr Mathew.

Offertory
1st, 8th and 15th
December to be
announced