

Sunday Message from Fr William for the Fourth Sunday of Advent 2023

Dear People of St Mary's, here's writing to you for the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. I'm taking a quick look back at all the good things we've done as a parish over the last 12 months. For me one of the most amazing things about St Mary's is the sheer number of volunteers that work for the flourishing of our parish. At our last PPC meeting in November we were talking about volunteers, in relation to the Synod questions, and the council suggested I draw up a list of roles and volunteers and share this with the parish, which I did a few weeks ago, linked to the bulletin. We have 50 different roles, with over 100 volunteers working in these roles. Some of these roles are especially demanding on time and commitment. A big thank you each and every one, on behalf of the parish, for all that you do. Special thank you to the coordinators of these different ministries for the extra time and commitment you put in.

Some of our young parishioners have recently completed the preparation course for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and are now beginning to celebrate this beautiful sacrament of divine forgiveness. Another group are about halfway through their preparation course for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This will be conferred by Bishop Marcus on Tuesday 13th February in St Robert's along with other parishes in the deanery. Yet another group will begin soon to embark on the preparation course for the Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion. Thank you to our catechists for the guidance and formation you are providing for these young people.

I celebrate Mass with the school twice a term. We've just celebrated our Advent Mass in school. Next one will be for the Feast of the Presentation. The school have just recently had a Section 48 inspection and report by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate. The school has been awarded 'Good' for overall effectiveness and 'Outstanding' for the quality of Religious Education. Congratulations to our amazing school.

Ministers of the Word participated in our annual Refresh evening last week and will be commissioned at Mass this Sunday. This has been our practice each Advent in recent years, recognising the importance of this ministry in our celebration of the liturgy, in parallel with our Refresh/Commissioning of Eucharistic Ministers each Lent.

We've also continued to engage in the PPC and as a parish in the work of the Synod on Synodality, working together for the future of the whole Church in our ongoing journey. We continue to look out for opportunities to work ecumenically where we can with the other Christian communities in Knaresborough. And in the coming year we can look forward to preparing as a parish for the Jubilee Year of 2025.

For now, on this Fourth Sunday of Advent, we stand on the threshold of one of the great feasts of the Church's year. Christmas is about to break upon us. Wishing you, your family and loved ones, lots of joy and celebration and happiness and peace for Christmas Day and throughout the Christmas Season.

William

Sunday, 24 December 2023