



# The Parish of St Mary & St Catherine

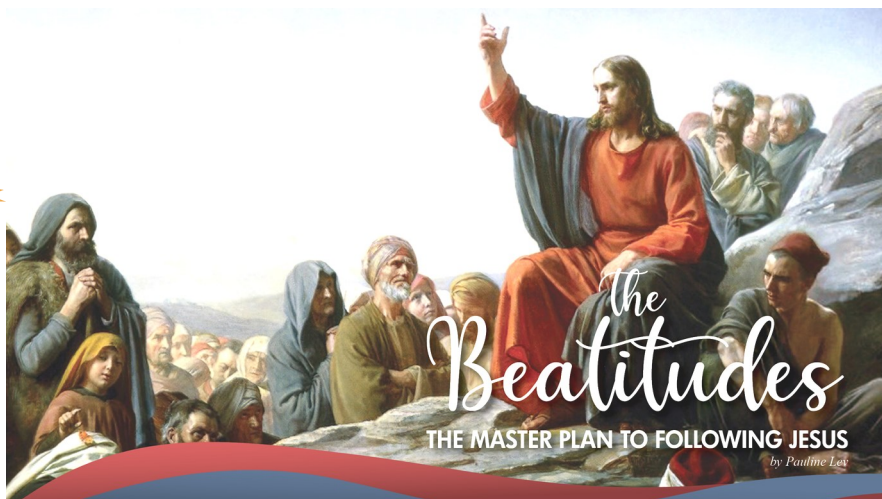


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Presbytery: St Catherine's, Stanifield Lane, Farington. PR25 4QG. 01772 421174

Fr Simon Henry ECLJ GOMLJ BA(Hons) MA

## Fourth Sunday of the Year



<b>Fourth Sunday in Year A. 1st February</b>	<b>8.30am</b>	Bernard Longton, Anniv
	<b>10.30am</b>	Isabella & Stanley Unsworth
Mon 2nd Feb: Presentation of the Lord	<b>9.30am</b>	Halstead & Worthington Families
Tuesday 3rd Feb:	<b>10am</b>	Requiem Mass for Rita Carney
Wednesday 4th Feb: St Blaise. Blessing of throats today.	<b>9.30am</b>	Stephen & Lekani Cottam & Family
Thursday 5th Feb: St Agatha	<b>9.30am</b>	Pro Populorum. (People of the Parish)
<b>PARISH COUNCIL MEETING</b>	<b>7pm</b>	
Friday 6th Feb: St Paul Miki & Companions	<b>7pm</b>	<b>NOVENA &amp; BENEDICTION</b>
		CONFESSIONS FOLLOWING
Saturday 7th Feb: Feria	—	— (No public Mass today)
<b>Fifth Sunday in Year A. 8th February</b>	<b>8.30am</b>	Zakariya Waqar Uddin
	<b>10.30am</b>	Pro Populorum. (People of the Parish)

**THANK YOU for your Offerings each week.**

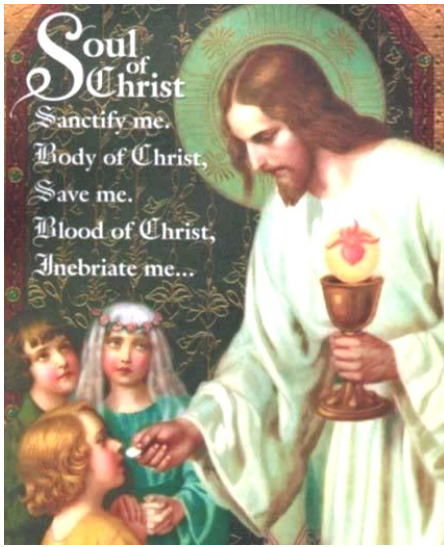
**100 Club: Joe Dickinson (63)**

Fr Simon's blog is at **offerimus tibi domine** (where you will also find the Mass times each week)

SAFEGUARDING REPRESENTATIVE: New appointment pending.

**MISSAL PAGES: Page 702.**

Unchanging parts of the Mass in the pink pages. Prayers before Mass, Pg 510. Prayers after Mass, Pg 698.



## FIRST CONFESSION & HOLY COMMUNIONS.

Our First Communion preparation has begun, with forty or so children taking part. The next session is in the Social Centre **on Wednesday 11th February at 6.30pm.**

**Children must sign the "Golden Book" at the back of church.**

This is to make a record of their prayers and attendance at Mass for each Sunday until their First Communion as a gift for Jesus. It will be carried up to the altar on the day of their First Communion.

**Please note that attendance at Mass & the preparation sessions are a prerequisite of being able to make First Communions in Eastertide of next year. If families are not able to make this commitment, then those children can defer and join the program next time round.**



*"Those whose names are written in the book of life." Phil 4:3 .*

**READERS:** Proclaiming the Scriptures at Mass is an important ministry, serving the people of God. We have been fortunate to recruit some new Readers recently but these have all been for the 8.30am Mass. Is there anyone interested in reading at the 10.30am Mass, please? Speak to Fr Simon or our Parish Assistant, Michael.



**A reminder that the Warm Spaces Coffee Morning**

**held each month during winter is this Thursday at 10am—12 noon.**

## ST PATRICK'S NIGHT CÉILIDH Saturday 21st March 2026.

A traditional Irish celebration with Irish Stew and live music to dance to. Suitable for all the family. Further details to follow.



## REFRESHMENTS AFTER MASS.

**All are welcome to come in for a cup of tea or coffee after Mass. Come and say hello!**

**WE ARE STILL SHORT OF VOLUNTEERS TO HELP AFTER THE 10.30AM MASS. PLEASE CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING TO HELP US CONTINUE ENABLING US TO MEET ONE ANOTHER AFTER MASS.**

**HATS IN CHURCH:** I've noticed that sometimes gentlemen are keeping their hats on in church. Traditionally a sign of respect is for men to uncover their heads in church, whilst the opposite applied to ladies; hence the mantilla was often worn by them; or more elaborate hats for special occasions. The removal of hats indoors anywhere for men, not just in church, was always the custom and the church was part of that, especially as the custom developed in our Western culture from injunctions in the Scriptures. It's not a mortal sin, or course, but customs showing respect are good to keep up, especially in our secular society where so often, respect for God and our neighbour have rather eroded away.



**Act of Spiritual Communion.** My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

*Spiritual communion is a practice that allows us to connect with God and express our longing for His presence, especially during times when we cannot attend Mass or receive the Eucharist. Many saints have emphasized the importance of this prayer, as it fosters a deep spiritual relationship with Christ & helps maintain one's faith and devotion.*







**Your Prayers are asked for all the sick, including:** Rosena Stacey, Vivienne Lee, Tom Miller, Paul Casey, Linda Melling, Tilly Gee, Kathleen Ward, Clare Butler, Maureen MacDonald, Louie Baines, Margaret McNiff, Elle Miller, Mark Duncan, Mary Ann Monaghan, Bernard Lawson, Mick Marshall, Carol Parkinson, Margaret Lawler, Catherine Thompson, Pat Fishwick, Stephen Dilworth.

We pray for those who are housebound & for those who love & care for them.  
*Mary conceived without sin - Pray for us who have recourse to thee.*

### JOIN OUR PARISH 100 CLUB

Thank you to those who have signed up for our 100 Club. We are waiting for all the new applicants to come in and you will then see your Standing Orders coming out of your accounts in the New Year. Please be patient as we digitalize the process and collate all our new members. You will be informed of your numbers in due course.

**Please take a SIGN UP FORM from the back of church for a Standing Order or scan the QR Code on the coloured leaflets.**

Thanks to David and Grace Barton, who have volunteered to revamp and streamline how the 100 Club functions and help our parish in this way.

**The Parish Centre is open during Sunday Masses, where toilets are easily accessible.**



### SOME THOUGHTS FOR PARISH PILGRIMAGES:

I had a busy but lovely time last week helping to lead a Pilgrimage to Rome. Knowledge of that has prompted some parishioners here to ask if we might make a similar parish pilgrimage. St Catherine's people will remember we went in 2019.

With that in mind over the next weeks we will ascertain whether there might be enough interest to arrange two possible trips.

This year, **August 2026 a Pilgrimage holiday to Saint Pierre de Maillé in France**, where St Catherine's parishioners have visited several times over the years. An historic area in the heart of France, exploring history and Catholicism, staying in the Villa St Pierre. Suitable for families as well, with particular activities like canoeing possible to be built in to the timetable.

**Pilgrimage next year 2027 in Rome, again, in the late summer/Autumn.** Staying in a 3\* hotel in the heart of the *Centro Storico*, the ancient heart of Rome, visiting the famous sites but also some less well-known ones, giving a fascinating glimpse into *La Bella Roma*!

Please note that both of these involve walking the routes, which requires anyone with mobility issues to think carefully about their ability to take part.

Further details and a presentation to follow to see what interest there might be.



MASS IN ST PETER'S BASILICA

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Church of San Salvatore in Onda, Rome,  
with St Vincent Pallotti under the altar



**The Feast of St. Blaise** is one of the most widespread pieces of popular saintly devotion to survive in contemporary liturgy. The priest or deacon places them upon each parishioner's throat and prays, "Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness."

St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, was born in Sebaste, which was the capital of Armenia Minor and is today called Sivas, located in Turkey. We know that he was martyred about the year 316 during the reign of the Emperor Licinius (308–24), on the order of the pagan governor Agricolaus. His cultus flourished in the east by the 6th century and the west by the 9th, in particular for his intervention with ailments of the throat.

In addition to his aid to those who suffer from diseases of the throat, he's also a patron of wool combers, wax chandlers and wild animals. In life, he was a physician elevated to the See of Sebaste, but received a divine order to retire to a cave and live an eremitical life during the Diocletian persecutions. His only companions were wild animals, and even the most ferocious of them were tame in his presence. He survived on the food they brought him, until one day a band of hunters was sent to gather animals for the arena. They found Blaise surrounded by wolves, bears and other dangerous creatures, yet unharmed. Knowing him to be a Christian, they took him to the governor. Along the way, two encounters central to his legend occurred. In the first, he met a widow distressed that a wolf had carried off a pig, her only food. Blaise summoned the wolf, who returned the pig, and he miraculously restored the animal to full health.

Later, as he was in prison awaiting sentence, this same widow found a way to smuggle him a little food. In some versions, she slaughtered the very pig he had restored to her and brought him its meat, a loaf of bread and a candle to light his dark cell. In thanksgiving for this kindness, he said, "Every year offer a candle in the church named for me, and all will be well with you and all who do the same."

The more famous story has to do with a mother whose son was slowly choking on a fishbone. Blaise touched the boy's throat and dislodged the bone, saving his life. It is this wonder that links Blaise to diseases of the throat, as miracles followed for people who prayed for his intercession. Once in the city, he was greeted by the prefect, as related by St. Jacobus in *The Golden Legend*: *'Greetings, Blaise, friend of the gods!'* *'Greetings likewise to Your Excellency!'* *Blaise responded, 'But do not call them gods but demons, because they are given over to eternal fire along with all who honor them!'* *This made the prefect angry, and he ordered Blaise to be beaten with cudgels and put back in jail. Blaise said to him: 'Foolish man, do you hope that your punishments will take my love of God away from me, when I have my God in me to give me strength?'* ... *The prefect ... ordered the torturers to hang him from a rafter and tear his flesh with iron spikes, then to put him back in jail. Seven women, however, followed and collected the drops of his blood, so they were arrested and ordered to sacrifice to the gods. They said: 'If you want us to adore your gods, place them reverently at the edge of the lake, so that we can wash their faces and worship them more cleanly!'* *This made the prefect happy, and what they had asked was quickly done. But the women snatched up the idols and threw them into the middle of the lake, saying: 'Now we shall see if they are really gods!'*

Unamused by their trick, the prefect tortured the women and their children to death, and then turned his attention back to Blaise. When he refused to sacrifice to the gods, he was cast into the lake, but firm ground rose beneath his feet. He taunted the prefect's men to call on their own gods to do the same, and 65 died trying to retrieve him from the middle of the lake. Jacobus concludes his entry by writing that an angel appeared to tell Blaise it was time for him to receive the crown of glory, whereupon the saint turned himself over to the prefect and was beheaded.

The growth of devotion to Blaise followed during the Crusades. Since his feast day followed immediately upon Candlemas (the Feast of the Presentation) and the blessing of the candles, the linkage between candles and throats is fairly obvious: there were lots of candles about.

England, Scotland, France, Germany and Italy all had thriving popular devotions to Blaise. Because in many accounts his flesh was torn by iron combs, he became the patron saint of wool combers, who often had thriving guilds that sponsored lavish processions on his feast. Wealthy merchants paraded in their finest clothes, and everyone connected with the wool industry participated, often making their own floats, including wood-themed scenes from mythology, such as Jason and the Golden Fleece, a company of Odysseus' men, and other themes. Farmers, dyers, weavers, loom makers, and others all participated, led by a figure of Blaise with a comb in one hand and a book in the other. Blaise Days were a pretty big deal, with people traveling from far away to participate.

**BLESSING OF THROATS ON WEDNESDAY FOLLOWING THE 9.30am MASS.** (Fest transferred from Tuesday due to a funeral.)

