

First reading

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 146(145):6c-7. 8-9a. 9b-10. R Matthew 5:3

R Come, Lord, and save us.

1. It is the LORD who preserves fidelity for ever, // who does justice to those who are oppressed. It is he who gives bread to the hungry, // the LORD who sets prisoners free. R
2. The LORD who opens the eyes of the blind, // the LORD who raises up those who are bowed down. It is the LORD who loves the just, // the LORD who protects the stranger. R
3. The LORD upholds the orphan and the widow, // but thwarts the path of the wicked. The LORD will reign for ever, // your God, O Zion, from age to age. R

Second reading

James 5:7-10

Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation

Isaiah 61:1 (Luke 4:18)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has sent me to proclaim good news to the poor.

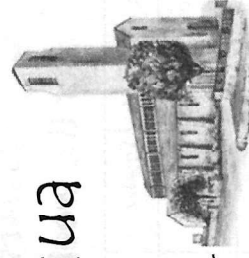
Gospel

Matthew 11:2-11

At that time: When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?' And Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.' As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 'What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

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St Anthony of Padua



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Parish Priest: Fr. Andrew Dawson. **Deacon (retired):** Rev. Tom Butler

Sunday Masses: 6.00pm (Saturday Vigil), 9.30am.

Weekday Mass: Mon, Tues, Fri: 9.15am. (Thurs 9.15am at Holy Family)

Confessions: Saturday 5.30—5.50pm

Annexe: 07792 256592 **Social Centre:** 0735963 **Primary school:** 726621

Playgroup/Preschool: 07963 700591 **Covenant Books:** 07396 796969

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Expectations, prisons and jailbreaks

We are a people of expectations, for example of what is appropriate behaviour for ourselves and others. Expectations offer predictability to our world and lives. Sometimes our expectations are of hope; other times they are of dread. Either way they have the power to imprison us. The thing about expectations is that they pull us out of the present moment into a future we do not yet have, except as it exists in our head. Pretty soon we begin to act and speak as if our expectations are the reality of our lives. We allow them to shape our attitudes, our beliefs and the way we relate to others. Those expectations even shape our image of who God is, where God can show up and how God should act. We trust our expectations of what God should be doing more than we trust what God is actually doing. John the Baptist had expectations. Today we find him questioning his expectations of Jesus because of the peaceful way that Jesus behaved, not at all like the revolutionary John had foretold. So what happened? How did John go from being a prophet with all the answers to a prisoner with questions? John seems confined by his own unmet expectations. His vision of the kingdom is too small, his expectation of the Messiah too narrow.

That is the danger of holding our expectations too tightly. We imprison ourselves with a small and too narrow a view of God, the kingdom, the world and ourselves. We risk confining God's work and life to our expectations. But that is not who God is or how God acts. We expect God to will make our lives easy and instead he calls us to live more deeply. We want God to eliminate our suffering and instead we discover God standing with us in the midst of our pain. We expect God to make us number one but he calls us to identify with the least, the last, the lost. We want him to make us strong but he calls us to discover his strength in our weakness. We hope God will destroy our enemies but he commands us to love them. We want to be the leaders but God tells us to be servants.

The Season of Advent is the season of escaping our expectations of God.

Michael Marsh

Third Sunday of Advent 14th December 2025

First Preface of Advent, with the Third Eucharistic Prayer / Missal page 38

DIARY and MASS INTENTIONS

for the week beginning Sunday 14th December 2025

Sat 6.00pm	<i>St. Ant</i>	Deacon John Kilshaw (Anniv)	
Sun 9.30am 11.00am	<i>St. Ant</i> <i>H. Family</i>	Dec rel & friends of Russell Family The People of our Parishes	3rd Sunday of Advent <i>Gaudete Sunday</i>
Mon 9.15am	<i>St. Ant</i>	John McDonagh (Anniv)	<i>Monday of Advent, Week 3</i>
Tue 9.15am	<i>St. Ant</i>	Denise Graham (LD)	<i>Tuesday of Advent, Week 3</i>
Wed 9.15am	<i>St. Ant</i>	No Mass	<i>17th December</i>
Thurs 9.15am	<i>H. Family</i>	The Staff and Pupils of our schools	<i>18th December</i>
Fri 9.15am 12 noon	<i>St. Ant</i> <i>H. Family</i>	Liz Smith (Sick) Requiem Mass for Vera Talbot	<i>19th December</i>
Sat 6.00pm Vigil of Sunday	<i>St. Ant</i>	Leonard Stevens (Anniv)	<i>20th December</i>
Sun 9.30am 11.00am	<i>St. Ant</i> <i>H. Family</i>	Tony Dewhurst (Anniv) The People of our Parishes	4th Sunday of Advent

Last Weekend: Attendance: 94+164=258, Offertory: £414.59. Card Machine: £75.00 Thank you for your generosity.

Parish Advent Carol Services: The Advent Carol Service at St Anthony's will be on Sunday 14 December beginning at 2pm. The Carol Service at Holy Family will be on Monday 22 December commencing at 7pm. All are welcome to both services.

Forthcoming Funeral: The Requiem Mass for Vera Talbot will be on Friday 19th December at 12 noon at Holy Family Church. May she rest in peace.

Thank you again to all who supported the Fairtrade stall last weekend. Fairtrade sales amounted to £176.60; CAFOD donations: £9.60; Rwanda donations: £5.10. CAFOD donations over the last 12 months totalled £94 which bought CAFOD World Gifts: 'Terrific Toilet' £89 and 'Happy Queen Bee' £5. When receipt cards arrive they will be on the Notice Board.

Parish Charities: "Vote now for the two 2026 parish charities (UK and Overseas). Forty two voting slips were returned with almost 60 separate charities nominated - amazing! Voting closes next Sunday 21 December"

Covenant Books Crib Festival: hosted at Holy Family Parish Hall every Thursday & Friday 10-4 and Saturday 10-12 until 21 December. It is free to come along and take part, to view the wonderful variety of cribs. Contact Ann Culkin-Smith on 07396 796969 for more information or to learn how to show your crib during the festival.

Christmas Mass Times: At St Anthony's: Vigil Mass on Wed 24th Dec at 6pm, and Mass on Christmas Day at 9:30. At Holy Family: Vigil Mass at 8pm, with Mass on Christmas Day at 11am. All welcome.

Individually Guided Retreat in the Ignatian Tradition: Details of an opportunity to make either a 6 or 8 day Individually Guided Retreat at Hynning Monastery in May can be found on the notice board.

Parish email address: With Fr Peter's departure the old BT Internet email address is now not recoverable. Please note anything sent to that address will not be received. Please use either stanthony.preston@lrcd.org.uk or stanthonyhollyfamily@gmail.com

Prayer intentions

The Pope's Intention for December: For Christians in areas of conflict.

Cycle Of Prayer: In Advent and Christmastide we pray especially for an openness to the Word of God, for migrants and refugees and for expectant mothers.

We pray for the sick and the elderly, especially Jo Counsel, Bill Embery, Marie Morris, John Mulholland, Deacon Tom Butler, Fr Peter Foulkes

For those who have died recently, especially Vera Talbot, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Winifred Crabbe, Deacon John Kilshaw, Edward

Giddins, Stella Parkinson, Margaret Burscough, Bridget Margaret Curwen, Canon Michael Geoghagan, Barbara May, Edward Rawcliffe, Winifred Shaw, Francis Harris,

Audrey Morgan, Frank Wastell, Jack Shorrocks, Christine Eaves, Norman Spicer, Ernest Lovatt, Malcolm Mullins, Howard Marshall, Leonard Stevens, Mary Frances Thompson, Enid Monica Moran, Barbara Ann Stocks,.

Father, may these, and all whom we have known who have gone before us, be received into the glory of the resurrection, won for us by your Son, Jesus, the Risen Lord.