

The Parish of St. Edward the Confessor

Registered Charity no. 234025

Father Peter Cryan Tel: 01625 423576 E-mail: st.edmacc@gmail.com

Parish website: <https://www.st-edward-macclesfield.org.uk/>

145 London Road, Macclesfield Cheshire SK11 7RL (For Parking SK11 7RZ)

Christ the King Pr. School Tel: 01625 466833; web-site www.christthekingcheshire.sch.uk



Newsletter for the week of 26th January 2025

Sunday Readings Cycle C

Weekday Readings Cycle I

Readings for the 3rd Ordinary Sunday: Nehemiah 8:2-6,8-10; Psalm 18; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-30; Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Psalm's Response: Your words, O Lord, are spirit and life.

Saturday 25th Jan 5.30pm 1st MASS of the 3rd SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

Sunday 26th Jan 10.30am MASS of the 3rd SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

Monday 27th Jan 9.15am Mass (Optional: St. Angela Merici, consecrated virgin, religious founder, educator)

Tuesday 28th Jan St. Thomas Aquinas, priest, religious, doctor of the Church

Wednesday 29th Jan 11.30am Mass

Thursday 30th Jan

Friday 31st Jan 1.00pm Mass (in Hospital Chapel) St. John Bosco, priest, religious founder, educator

Saturday 1st Feb 10.00am Mass

10.30-11am Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday 1st Feb 5.30pm 1st Mass of Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Sunday 2nd Feb 10.30am Mass of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Readings for the Presentation of the Lord: Malachi 3:1-4; Psalm 24(23) Hebrews 2;14-18; Luke 2:22-40

THE FEAST of the PRESENTATION

Next Sun 2nd Feb we celebrate the Presentation of the Lord by gathering in the Community Room before Mass both on Saturday and Sunday for the blessing & lighting of candles then all making a processional entrance into the church

SACRAMENT of CONFIRMATION

Next Sun 2nd Feb meeting of parents and interested young Catholics in the Community Room after Mass. Young people who are in Year 8 & above who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation together with a parent(s) are invited to meet with Fr. Peter. In this area for Confirmation the candidates from each parish in the area come together in one celebration with Bishop Mark usually on a Friday in June.

REVISED PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL(PPC) CONSTITUTION

The PPC has reviewed & revised its constitution in the light of changing circumstances and it is posted for inspection in the Community Room and the back of church.

FOOD BANK

The *Silk Life* Food Bank is looking for items. It is at this time of the year when struggling people & families often need the most help. See the lists on posters e.g.: UHT milk, stewed steak, beef casserole, chili con carne, instant mash..

THANK YOU for YOUR MAGNIFICENT GENEROSITY

Last Sunday's Collection £245.85

Retired Priests Fund £435.00

RETIRED & SICK PRIESTS FUND

There is still an opportunity to make a donation to the *Retired Priests' Fund*. You may also make a donation online by going to <https://www.dioceseofshrewsbury.org/retired-priests-fund>

INTRODUCTION TO JUBILEE YEAR'25

Next Saturday 1st Feb 11.30am-1pm & 2- 3.30pm at St. Joseph's Stockport: programme is on the noticeboards. With 3 speakers the morning session is perhaps the more informative and could be done by itself. St. Joseph's is on Tatton St. in the centre of Stockport. Parking is available at the school at the rear of the church entered via Fletcher St. (SK1 1DY)

GET IN TOUCH QUICKLY –IF YOU ARE SICK If you or your relative enters Macclesfield Hospital or East Cheshire Hospice let Fr. Peter C. know as soon as possible tel: 01625 423576 or by e-mail st.edmacc@gmail.com

DIARY OF EVENTS

Sat 24th Feb Planned date for 1st Sacr. of Reconciliation

Wed 5th March Ash Wednesday

Sun 16th March CAFOD Lent Fast Collection

Sun 30th Start of British Summer Time (B.S.T.)

Sun 20th April Easter

Sun 18th May Planned date for 1st Holy Communion

Open Doors' annual report found that the total number of Christians facing persecution rose in 2024, up to 1 in 7 worldwide.

The persecution of Christians around the world increased in 2024, according to an annual report from *Open Doors*, an international organization that monitors and supports Christians in nations hostile to the faith.

[Open Doors has released its report](#)

The 2025 *Open Doors* World Watch List indicated that around 380 million Christians are currently living in regions in which they face persecution or discrimination for their faith.

Furthermore, nearly 210,000 were displaced due to their faith; nearly 4,000 were sexually assaulted, harassed, or forced into a non-Christian marriage; about 55,000 were beaten, threatened, or abused; and 4,476 were killed for their Christian faith.

The full list of the 50 nations where Christian persecution is most prevalent can be seen on [Open Doors' report](#). These are the 10 worst offenders.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan was 10th on the list of countries most hostile to the Christian faith, where the report notes that it is practically impossible to openly practice. There, the Taliban strictly enforces laws in which Christian conversion is punishable by death. Due to the harsh penalties, many Christians who are discovered have no choice but to flee. The report notes that restrictions on women and ethnic minorities makes being Christian even more dangerous.

Iran

In Iran, there are two categories of Christian: recognized and unrecognized. Those who are recognized include historical communities of Armenian and Assyrian Christians, but *Open Doors* notes that these are still treated as second-class citizens. On the other hand, the unrecognized Christians are converts who must hide their conversion as it is illegal in Iran. Christian converts are considered to have been influenced by Western culture and are thus seen as a threat to Islam and the regime.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, Christians face persecution primarily from the nation's strict blasphemy laws, for which the primary punishment is death. While Christians make up only 1.8% of the Pakistani population, they are disproportionately targeted by about 25% of the blasphemy charges. If the courts don't get the Christians first, a wild mob mentality among Muslim citizens could see an accused Christian lynched or stoned to death by an angry crowd.

Nigeria

With roving gangs of jihadist militants visiting violence upon Christian towns and communities, Nigeria is considered the 7th most dangerous country for the faithful. The government has been completely ineffective at stopping attacks from a variety of groups, including Fulani fighters, Boko Haram, and ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province). Attacks from these gangs see Christian men swiftly killed while Christian women are abducted and targeted for sexual violence.

Eritrea

Described in the report as the “North Korea of Africa,” Eritrea forces Christians to contend with heavily monitored phone calls and internet use that places all communications under scrutiny. While the government has officially recognized some Christian churches – Eritrean Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran churches – those who convert face similar situations as those in Iran. Furthermore, the government has been conscripting young Christians into its armed forces, for indefinite periods of time.

Sudan

Open Doors notes that Sudan had been on the road to religious freedom when a coup and the war that followed saw these hopes dashed. The war has created the largest hunger and displacement crisis currently ongoing in the world and with neither side sympathetic to Christians, it has allowed persecution to run rampant. The average Sudanese Christian lives in fear of abduction and execution, while over 100 churches have been attacked in the country.

Libya

Libya is another nation especially hostile to Christian converts, and another in which gangs of Islamic militants target Christians. This is most especially true for foreign Christians who escaped to Libya from sub-Saharan Africa, who are often brutally murdered by the gangs. Christians who express their faith openly do so at extreme risk. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of a centralized government to enforce laws.

Yemen

The civil war in Yemen has torn the country into three different regional territories, some of which are held by recognized terrorist organizations, but none of them are kind to Christians. In some areas it is dangerous to even own a Bible, while those who are discovered to be Christian can be monitored, detained, tortured, or killed. Despite the danger, the report notes that many Muslims have become disillusioned with Islam and that the Church in Yemen is growing.

Somalia

In this nation that follows Sharia (Islamic law), those who are discovered to be Christian in Somalia are often murdered on the spot. It is another nation in which militants routinely target Christians, but Christians also face overwhelming social pressures from the family and community. Even being suspected of having accepted Christianity can place one in danger from their neighbours. Christians discovered in Somalia could face house arrest, forced marriage, forced Islamic rituals, and death.

North Korea

For nearly 30 years, North Korea has consistently been the nation in which Christians face the harshest persecution. It is another nation where discovered Christians may be immediately killed, but they could also be sent to a labour camp where the survival rate is practically zero. Those who are discovered may not be punished alone either, as the government could choose to go after their whole family. All Christians must worship in secret. *Open Doors* has suggested that the underground church is growing & estimates that there are some 400,000 Christians worshipping in secret in North.



Set aside 10-15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross and remain still for a minute of settling silence.



Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present. Read the Gospel, aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.

1

Read

The Gospel for Sunday 2nd February 2025

THE CHILD DESTINED FOR THE RISE AND FALL OF MANY

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.' As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.' There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Taken from Luke 2:22-40 The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Year C

2

Reflect

After reading the Gospel, did any words stand out? If they did, ponder or discuss them before proceeding with the reflection.

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

The story of the Presentation of the child Jesus in the Temple is dominated by Simeon's welcome, 'a light to enlighten the gentiles and the glory of your people Israel', and by his warning to Mary, 'a sword will pierce your heart'. Simeon reiterates the angel's promise that the child would fulfil the destiny of Israel and Israel's mission to the nations. Much like any family life, the promised future included the delights of the growing, developing child, and the background fear that the great destiny of each child may include sorrow and even heart-break. How much did Mary and Joseph know about the precious child they were nurturing? As he grew to independence did he become more loving and supportive? How did his contemporaries find him? Was he a leader? Did he stand out from the pack? Each of us has a private picture of the child, the boy, the adolescent, the young man. If he was fully human, he had the same frustrations and worries as every child growing in youth and through puberty. All we know for sure is that 'the child grew to maturity' and that Mary 'pondered all these things in her heart' - with Simeon's welcome and warning before her mind. **Imagine Jesus' first serious conversation as an enquiring child with Mary.**

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

3

Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Thank God for any insight you may have received.

Then ask God to bless you with a spiritual gift to help you act on any resolution you have made. Perhaps: love, hope, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, patience, humility, joy, forgiveness, self-control, courage, generosity, faith or something else.

4

Pray for Families

This Wednesday's word for our school families is HOPE!

After praying for your loved ones, please remember to pray for our present and future Church, particularly for the families connected to our schools. You may want to conclude this special weekly time with a simple prayer such as:

St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church, pray for us. Mary, Star of Evangelisation, pray for us. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †



Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of **Sunday 2nd February 2025**



1st Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

The Coming of The Lord

The Lord God says this: Look, I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his Temple; and the angel of the covenant whom you are longing for, yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire and the fullers' alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make the offering to the Lord as it should be made. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then be welcomed by the Lord as in former days, as in the years of old.



This first reading from Malachi is dire and threatening. The Lord will come to his Temple and refine it. The reading seems to fit better with the coming of Jesus to the Temple to cleanse it in the final days of his ministry than with the coming of the child Jesus in helpless innocence. Yet the searing, final coming is already presaged in the coming of the young Jesus to the Temple to be greeted by Simeon as the fulfilment of God's promise of salvation. Malachi prophesied the purging of the sons of Levi, and no one can deny that a dreadful purging of the sons of Levi took place at the sack of Jerusalem in the year 70AD; the people had failed to recognize their Lord. This cannot but give us pause to reflect whether we, who have theoretically committed ourselves to Christ, have in fact responded and been converted and purged. Are we in any way better than those who were condemned and suffered, or are we merely more secretive, better at concealing our faults and secret distortions from others? The thoughts of all hearts will be laid bare in the end. It might be as well to start laying our hearts bare (or purging them) now.

How is it that many people failed to recognize who Jesus was?



2nd Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18

The Faithful High Priest

Since all the children share the same blood and flesh, Jesus too shared equally in it, so that by his death he could take away all the power of the devil, who had power over death, and set free all those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins. That is, because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted.



The inclusion of this reading is unbelievably moving: the child presented in the Temple is also to suffer, the sword will pierce Mary's heart. But it is because Jesus is fully human, and now a helpless child, that his loving obedience to the Father will save the human race. 'What was not assumed was not saved,' say the Fathers. In Jesus, the source of our salvation, the disobedience of Adam was washed away. Adam is the representative of us all, personifying the human race. Jesus had to be like his brothers and sisters, to share their full human nature if he was to save their human nature. He shared our baby helplessness, our adolescent anguish, our fear of death, our loss of friends whom we thought were faithful. In all this he knit himself into the human race and, by taking it upon himself, saved it by joining it once more into the Father's love. The language of high priesthood is used in this Letter to the Hebrews because the letter is written to Hebrews who were pining for the rituals of the Temple. But the priesthood of Christ is radically different, according to the order of Melchizedek (an unknown priesthood), and no longer that of Aaron. **What was the purpose of Jesus' death?**

Jesus' loving obedience to the Father will save the human race.

The Wednesday Word Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God

**The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph**