



# Our Lady and St Gerard's Lostock Hall

## News and Views

Issue No 696 January  
2026

### Thank You

As we start another New Year it is only right to thank everyone who volunteers their help in the Parish week in and week out.

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*Mary, Mother of God  
Feast Day 1<sup>st</sup> January*

<b>Feast Days in January</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Big Freeze of 1963</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>Cop 30</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Metanoia Project</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>Diary</b>	<b>Page 22</b>



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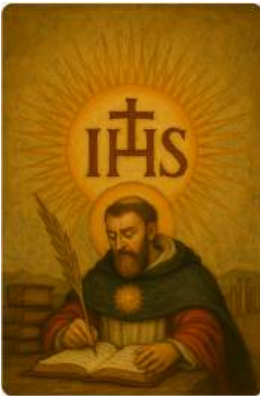
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## The Feast Days of Catholic Saints in January: A Month of Beginnings and Witness

January, the first month of the calendar year, carries a symbolic weight in the Catholic tradition. As the Church turns its gaze toward renewal, mission, and the unfolding of salvation history, the liturgical calendar presents a rich tapestry of saints whose lives illuminate the path of Christian discipleship. From towering theologians to humble servants, January's feast days offer a spiritual roadmap for beginning the year with purpose and devotion.



A Month Dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus  
According to Catholic tradition, January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus, a theme that shapes the month's spiritual character. This dedication underscores the centrality of Christ's identity and mission, reminding the faithful that every saint's holiness ultimately reflects the radiance of Christ Himself.

### Early January: Foundations of Faith and Doctrine

The month opens on January 1st with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, a feast affirming Mary's role in salvation history and her title defined at the Council of Ephesus in 431. This solemnity sets a tone of reverence and gratitude for the Incarnation.



On January 2nd, the Church honours St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzus, two Cappadocian Fathers whose theological brilliance shaped the early Church's

understanding of the Trinity. Their feast invites reflection on the intellectual foundations of Christian belief.

January 4th brings the feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born saint, known for her pioneering work in Catholic education and her witness as a convert and mother.

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Her life embodies resilience and the transformative power of faith.

## Mid-January: Missionaries, Teachers, and Monastics

The middle of the month highlights saints whose lives were marked by service, evangelization, and spiritual discipline.

St. John Neumann (January 5th), a bishop of Philadelphia, is remembered for his dedication to Catholic education and immigrant communities.

St. André Bessette (January 6th), a humble doorkeeper, became known for his healing ministry and devotion to St. Joseph.



St Hilary of Poitiers

St. Hilary of Poitiers (January 13th), a Doctor of the Church, defended orthodoxy during the Arian controversy.

St. Antony the Abbot (January 17th), the father of monasticism, represents the call to radical simplicity and spiritual warfare in the desert.

These feasts collectively highlight the diversity of vocations within the Church—teachers, bishops, mystics, and lay brothers—each contributing uniquely to the life of faith.

## Late January: Martyrs and Pastors

January 21st – St. Agnes A young Roman martyr, symbol of purity and courage. Illustration: Agnes holding a lamb, with Roman ruins in the background.

January 22nd – St. Vincent of Saragossa A deacon martyred for his faith, remembered for his steadfastness.



St Agnes



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January 24th – St. Francis de Sales Bishop and spiritual writer, known for his gentle guidance in *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Illustration: Francis writing at a desk, surrounded by books and quills..

St Frances

January 25th – Conversion of St. Paul Celebrates Paul's dramatic transformation from persecutor to apostle. Illustration: Paul falling from his horse, blinded by divine light



The Conversion of St Paul

### **Closing the Month: Educators and Visionaries**

January 27th – St. Angela Merici Founder of the Ursulines, dedicated to educating girls.



January 28th – St. Thomas Aquinas The “Angelic Doctor,” whose synthesis of faith and reason shaped Catholic theology. Illustration: Aquinas with a massive book, rays of light descending upon him.

January's saints form a mosaic of holiness: theologians, martyrs, educators, mystics, and servants. Their feast days remind the faithful that sanctity is not confined to one path but is a universal call. Anchored by the Holy Name of Jesus, January invites believers to begin the year with courage, wisdom, and devotion.

The Thomas Aquinas



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## **Who Remembers the Big Freeze of 1963?**

The winter of 1963, remembered as the “Big Freeze,” was one of the coldest and most disruptive winters in modern British history, lasting from late December 1962 until March 1963.

### **Setting the Scene**

The winter of 1962–1963 struck Britain with an intensity not seen for centuries. Beginning on 22nd December 1962, a high-pressure system settled northeast of the UK, pulling in bitterly cold winds from the east. What followed was a relentless freeze that gripped the nation for nearly three months.

Temperatures: Plummeted to lows of  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  in some regions.

Snowfall: Snowdrifts reached up to 20 feet, blocking roads and isolating villages.

Frozen waters: Rivers, lakes, and even parts of the sea froze solid.

In the Central England Temperature record, which dates back to 1659, only the winters of 1683–84 and 1739–40 were colder.

### **Impact on Daily Life**

The Big Freeze disrupted nearly every aspect of life in Britain:

- **Transport chaos:** Roads and railways were buried under snow, halting travel and trade.
- **Food and fuel shortages:** Supplies dwindled as deliveries became impossible; milk was famously delivered by tractor in some areas.
- **Sports cancellations:** Football matches were postponed for weeks, with pitches frozen solid.
- **Community resilience:** Villages cut off by snow relied on helicopters and the armed forces for essential supplies

*Elizabeth Samuel Hampers*

— & —

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## Historical Significance

The winter of 1963 was the coldest since 1740, making it the third coldest on record in Britain.

It became a defining event in post-war British memory, often compared to the severe winter of 1947.

The freeze highlighted vulnerabilities in infrastructure and energy supply, sparking debates about preparedness for extreme weather.

## Legacy

The Big Freeze of 1963 remains etched in British history not only for its meteorological severity but also for the way it tested national resilience. For older generations, it is a touchstone memory—stories of frozen rivers, blocked roads, and communities pulling together in adversity. For historians, it stands as a reminder of how nature can still bring modern society to a standstill.

In short: the winter of 1963 was a season when Britain became an Arctic snow globe, enduring months of ice and hardship, and leaving behind one of the most remarkable chapters in the nation's weather history.

Do you Remember it, I certainly do, I was 13 at the time and our High School (Comprehensive) for Catholics was a 10 mile train ride to the nearest town. The snow was impacted on pavements so much so that we looked down on the cars on the road which was normally the same height.

I walked to the train station as usual (3 miles) and caught the train (still a couple of steam at that time but not many) at about 7:30 am. They were never late. At the other end it was another couple of miles to walk to school. The schools never closed, whatever the disaster, no heat, put a coat on. The return journey was the same, train and walk home and arrive just before 5 pm for tea. I didn't mention scrapping the ice off the bedroom



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window first thing to see what was in store for the day did I? We always had a cooked breakfast to set us up for the day. My sister was Head Girl during my first year but I always travelled by myself, she was never ready so I caught the early train and she got the later one.

Motive - I had a motive for getting to school early. We always had a whole school assembly and that meant setting the school hall / dining room up. If I got there early I could help the caretaker and stay inside out of the bitter cold weather. There was no coming into class early because it was raining or snowing etc. in those days.

I lived in the South of England, what was it like up North for you that winter?

Editor.

### **Gardening in December**

I think I would be good on a farm as I love being outdoors. I also love the smell of hay and 'mucking out' the animals.

Just one thing that goes against the idea is I'm scared of cows, horses and pigs, in fact anything that bites or kicks - so away with that dream!

Long tailed tits in the garden after suet. Pretty birds. The high winds made sure the loose branch eventually came down. A big one too. It missed next door's greenhouse.

Saw some celendines poking through (very early) and I trimmed the holly bush and some nettles.

Still giving the squirrels peanuts. I emptied a blocked drain to find it full of the things (peanuts of course) what a place to stash your winter feast!

Their coats are lovely and thick at this time of the year.

Keep happy and remember "Winter doesn't last forever"



**LW**



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## **COP 30 and climate change**

When December News and Views went to print COP 30 was just finishing and little seemed to have been achieved. The main participants were still arguing as to what was their individual responsibility in trying to ensure that the target to keep climate change to 1.5 degree centigrade by 2050, a target agreed 10 yrs ago at the COP held in Paris, was still achievable.

CAFOD were calling for the UK, under the leadership of Ed Miliband, to take bold and ambitious action at the conference. Apparently Miliband received over 1500 messages from CAFOD supporters, and for this they were very grateful.

COP 30 certainly didn't achieve everything that's needed and there certainly wasn't enough progress on agreeing substantial funding to help the poorest communities cope with the effects of climate change and help them prepare for the future.

However there was substantial progress on agreeing a process for transitioning to a greener future away from fossil fuels in a fair and democratic way. This is something campaigners have been fighting hard for, so it is seen as a significant victory.

As Liz Cronin, CAFOD's lead on climate change explains, "This should be celebrated; it is a testament to the strength of civil society and developing countries and what the multilateral COP process can achieve"

The battle goes on, and Liz emphasises that two important fights need to be taken to the next Cop, mainly that developed countries need to finally deliver the non-debt creating finance that climate-vulnerable countries need, and that they unite around the fossil fuel commitment hard-won two COPs ago.

Without Botha 1.5 degree centigrade world view is out of reach. Thank you also to all the parishioners who signed the debt petition earlier in the year and CAFOD received well over 34,000 signatures from Catholic parishes. Apparently it's still not too late to tell your MP how much support this petition received and you can email CAFOD at [campaigns@cafod.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@cafod.org.uk) for the sample text.



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## **Metanoia project**

You will have all seen the notice in the news sheet about the Metanoia group who provide a hot meal to the homeless of Preston on Tuesday nights. For those of us who are comfortably off it's difficult to imagine what it must be like especially in this present wet and windy season to try and sleep in a cardboard box or a doorway but as Christians we must try and help wherever we can and that's just what this group is trying to do.

If anyone feels they can help in any way with the cooking on a Tuesday night please contact Jen on 07957 566741 or [jen@metanoiaproject.co.uk](mailto:jen@metanoiaproject.co.uk).

Jen emphasises that any help, weekly, monthly, or even yearly would be much appreciated. In her own words 'We'd love to chat this through and see how God will use you in this beautiful ministry' On Wednesday night they also have a clothes drop-in and collect warm clothing to hand out to those in need, especially warm hats, gloves, socks etc. There is a box at the back of St Gerard's where you can donate used and new items.

Just before Christmas a large amount of these donated items, alongside Christmas presents, were taken along to St Wilfrid's and Jen would like to thank everyone for their kindness and many blessings. You can read more of what the Metanoia group are all about on : [Metanoiaproject.co.uk](http://Metanoiaproject.co.uk).

## **Gratitude**

It's that time of the year again when December brings out the best in folk (or the worst!), this is when the shops are overloaded with Christmas goods and customers are on the lookout for everything chocolatey or sparkly.

This is when I think about gratitude and realise that what we possess already, is probably enough. Those of us old enough to remember rationing will know that Christmas was a much smaller occasion with a small toy, chocolate coins and a tangerine at the end of the stocking. Simple pleasures which we enjoyed, less work, less expense, less stress.

† NEAL †  
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I feel sad when I think of the parishioners who have passed away this year, people that we are used to seeing on Sunday and count them as friends. It will be different this year for their families and friends as endings and losses will change who you have sat round the table. It reminds us to be grateful for who and what we have.

One of my greatest pleasures is to sit round the table with my family and feel the spirit of Christmas.

Gratitude will reframe everything in your life if you let it. Invite gratitude into your life, just be grateful for who you are.

In the words of Meister Eckhart

“If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is THANK YOU, it will be enough”

Wishing everyone love and peace at Christmas.

**Grace Robinson**

## **The Old Year Greet the New Year**

At the edge of midnight, the old year packed its bags quietly.

It left behind a calendar with dog-eared corners, a few unfinished apologies, and a laugh that still echoed in the kitchen. When the clock struck twelve, the door creaked open and the New Year stepped in—barefoot, curious, carrying nothing but a blank notebook. “Is it heavy?” the old year asked. “Only with possibility,” the New Year smiled.

Outside, fireworks stitched light into the sky, but inside, something softer happened. A promise was made—not to be perfect, not to be fearless, but to keep going. To try again where trying had once failed. To water the small hopes that had survived winter.

As dawn arrived, the New Year sat by the window and began to write. The first line was simple:

Once more, with courage.

And that was enough to begin.

**Parish Clergy: Fr Mark Harold (Rural Dean & Parish Priest),  
Fr Colin Battell OSB.  
Tel: Fr Mark 332050; Fr Colin 321201.**

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## **Weekly Services**

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   Wednesday at 9:15 am

**Reconciliation:**      Confessions -                      Saturday 5 pm to 5:15 pm.

**Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:**      Monday 18:00 to 18:30

**Baptisms** - To arrange a Baptism please call the parish office on 01772 335387 between 9—11.45 am. (Mon – Fri). Parents are expected to attend a Baptism Preparation meeting before a Baptism can take place. If people have not been in the practice of attending church regularly, they are asked to attend Mass for a period of six weeks prior to the Baptism to help them to be spiritually prepared for the sacrament and to get into the habit of practicing the Faith.

### **No Priest! What do we do?**

If there is an Emergency and no Priest is available for the weekend Masses, the Eucharistic Ministers, particularly those who have been trained, will perform a Holy Communion Service and this will replace the Mass. Please note that this is Only in an Emergency and there is no time to arrange for another priest or no other is Priest is available.

## Marriages

At least six months notification of Marriage is required. Pre-marriage instruction is mandatory and organised by the Diocese.

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335387 to arrange Notification and Preparation.

## Parish Organisations

### CONTACT

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Items for News & Views can be left at the Presbytery or emailed to the editor at [newsviews@saintgerards.org.uk](mailto:newsviews@saintgerards.org.uk)

The last day for submissions is the 20th of each month.

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# St Mary's Brownedge

## Live Streaming Times

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<b>Private Prayer</b>	<b>Tuesday &amp; Thursday</b>	<b>3 pm to 4 pm</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Mass</b>	<b>7 pm Vigil</b>

<b>4th</b>	<b>2nd Sunday of Christmas</b>	<b>25th</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Year</b>
<b>6th</b>	<b>The Epiphany - Holy Day of Obligation</b>	27th	St Angela Merici
7th	St Raymond of Penyafort	28th	St Thomas Aquinas
<b>11th</b>	<b>The Baptism of the Lord</b>	31st	St John Bosco
12th	St Aelred of Rievaulx	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Feb</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year</b>
13th	St Hilary	2nd	The Presentation of the Lord
17th	St Anthony	3rd	St Ansgar
<b>18th</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Year</b>	5th	St Agatha
19th	St Wulstan	6th	Ss Paul Miki & Comp
20th	St Fabian	<b>8th</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year</b>
21st	St Agnes	10th	St Scholastica
22nd	St Vincent	<b>11th</b>	<b>Our Lady of Lourdes</b>
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