

Real Sight

Alice is blind. She's also deaf. When I first met her I started to finger spell on her hand but she was streets ahead of me. She sussed out the remainder of my slowly evolving sentence and replied with a firm staccato voice. Over time I got to know her as a well-travelled, very intelligent woman who read two or three braille books a week. I'm impressed frequently by the skills and practical ways individuals develop to get through the day.

Alice interprets textures, temperatures, winds and weather, picking up geographical clues from the smell of a hot dog stall, of coffee, of the local takeaway. I asked her once whether sight or sound would be the sense she'd most prefer. Her answer was quick and direct - sight. She'd known both as a child before illness robbed her of what we take for granted, setting her on a radical path of re-learning that never ends. Dependent and grateful as she is, she teaches us - if we're ready to learn.

Today's Gospel shows us Jesus giving sight to a man born blind. Close your eyes. Think how you'd get to your front door, manage the stairs successfully or walk down the street without your sight. The wonder and enormity of this gift to this man is stunning. Sit and think about it. The religious authorities of the time didn't appreciate it. Wrongly, they attributed blindness to sins of his parents. Instead of rejoicing in this man's miracle, they were incensed that he'd been healed on the Sabbath. Who's blind here? Perhaps lack of familiarity with blind people leaves us not knowing whether to offer or how to help. Jesus sees individuals.

I've always been inspired by the life of Helen Keller, and by David Blunkett's sense of public service, but Alice grounded me because I met her and had to relate, to learn, to be taught and challenged. Some of our church prayers ask the Lord to 'open the eyes of our minds'. It's not comfortable to admit that our minds are closed, that we live with our eyes shut. The man in the Gospel story is still challenging us, that is, if we are able to see him.

Escomb Partnership Note



Happy Mother's Day

CAFOD Family Fast envelopes: there is still time to hand them in.

The Diocese has created a **Pastoral Strategy** covering the period from now until 2035, a copy of which can be found on the Diocesan website rcdhn.org.uk

Sister Anna is selling rosary beads at £4 each available at the back of church. They are made by vulnerable women in **Muhoroni, Kenya**, to enable them to help themselves and their families. Please support this worthy cause which provides them not only with a sustainable income but also with dignity.



Daily Readings can be found by scanning the QR code, using the camera on your smart phone.



Saint Mary,	Aycliffe	DL5 4HT
Saint Thomas,	Shildon	DL4 1HP
All Saints,	Ferryhill	DL17 8ET
Sacred Heart,	Chilton	DL17 0PW
Saint Joseph,	Coundon	DL14 8NL



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**14 / 15 March - 4th Sunday of Lent (A)
Laetare (Rejoice) Sunday / Mothers' Day**



Our Healer

Jesus, our Shepherd and King, a descendant of David, is a special kind of Leader, capable of healing and restoring sight and inner vision.

In the readings, and the preparations for baptism, we begin to see what it means to follow the Light of the World, and to have the quality of light in our daily lives.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the darkness in this world with its horrors, injustices, violence and fears; but dark elements often dwell within us manifesting as bitterness of heart, pride, lack of forgiveness, anger and intolerance, though we may fail to see them.

Misleading or deceptive moral principles, and accepted standards, reside within our nature, or are human constructions which hide God's truth from view. Jesus led the blind man into the Light through the gift of an unwavering faith, even in the face of rejection and disapproval, and He can lead us too, if we hear His words and seek help from Him to illuminate our way to His Kingdom.

Sat	12.00	Aycliffe	Joe and Ann Gordon, and Family
14	16.00	Shildon	Pietrina Gabriele, Catherine Rossi
Mar	18.00	Chilton	No Intention given
Sun	09.00	Coundon	Victor Atkinson
15	10.00	Aycliffe	Special Intention
Mar	10.30	Ferryhill	Father W Elkin
	12.30	Aycliffe	Polish language mass
	15.00	Ferryhill	Stations of the Cross
	16.00	Coundon	Stations of the Cross
	18.00	Aycliffe	Major John C Lam (RIP)

*All are welcome
in all of our churches
— no exceptions!*

New to the Parish?
Please introduce yourself after
Mass. Registration Forms are
located in the church porch.

St Mary's: Please see list in church porch for Ministers to 'sign up' for **Holy Week Ministry** duties.

Saturday 21 March, 4pm at St Thomas': **Mass and Penitential Service.**

21 / 22 March at St Mary's: **SVP Chocolate Raffle.**

Sunday 22 March, 10am at St Mary's: cake sale on behalf of Polish people living in poverty in **Lithuania** and **Belarus.**

Tuesday 24 March, 9.45am All Saints: **Penitential Service.**

Tuesday 24 March, 6pm Sacred Heart: **Penitential Service.**

Wednesday 25 March, 10am St Mary's: **Polishing brasses** for Easter - all welcome to come and lend a hand.

Wednesday 25 March, 6pm Coundon: **Penitential Service.**

Thursday 26 March, 1.30pm at All Saints: Requiem Mass for **Jean Gee.**

Monday 30 March, 10am at St Mary's: Mass (including **Penitential Service**). Please note change of date.

Monday 30 March: 6pm at All Saints, Penitential Service

Monday 30 March, 6pm at St Mary's: **Confession** (English and Polish)

Tuesday 31 March, 10.45am at St Mary's: **Stations of the Cross** led by St Joseph's school.

Wednesday 1 April, 11am at St Mary's Cathedral in Newcastle: **Chrism mass.**

Saturday 25th April, 10am to 5pm at Minsteracres: **Walking Retreat.** Details at minsteracres.org.uk

Holy Week

(29 March to 5 April)

Maundy Thursday Mass: 4pm St Thomas', 5pm All Saints, 7pm St Mary's, 7pm St Joseph's Coundon.

Good Friday Stations of the Cross: 10am St Mary's, 10.30am Sacred Heart.

Good Friday Passion Service: 1pm St Thomas', 1pm St Joseph's Coundon, 3pm St Mary's, 3pm All Saints.

Holy Saturday Blessing of baskets (Polish): 10am St Mary's.

Holy Saturday Vigil: 12 noon St Mary's, 4pm St Thomas', 5pm All Saints, 7pm St Joseph's Coundon, 8pm St Mary's.

Easter Sunday Mass: 7.30am St Marys (Polish), 9am St Joseph's Coundon, 9am St Thomas', 10am St Mary's, 10.30am Sacred Heart, 6pm St Mary's.

Please pray for all the sick

Christine Bainbridge, Julie Kirkbride, Vilna Woolhead, Hannibal Gonsalves, Bernard Molyneux, Joan Neasham, Mary Horton, Chris Palmer, Sharon Pape, Maureen Palmer, Jamie Spence, Tom Brett, George Walton, Carla Middleton, Raymond Lowey, Maria Hewitt, Peter Rogan, Mary Nichol, Rita Farthing, Helen Dungey, Caroline Lambie, C Hezeltine.

Masses this week

Mon	09.30	Coundon	Gerard, Pat & Anthony Fleming
16	09.40	Aycliffe	Rosary
Mar	10.00	Aycliffe	John Embleton (A)
Tue	09.15	Ferryhill	Joan Gibson
17	09.50	Aycliffe	Divine Mercy
Mar	10.00	Aycliffe	Special Intention
	19.00	Coundon	Exposition
Wed	09.15	Ferryhill	No intention requested
18	09.30	Shildon	Stations of the Cross
Mar	10.00	Shildon	<u>Communion Service</u>
Thu	09.30	Coundon	For the parish and school
19	11.00	Aycliffe	Stations of the Cross
Mar	11.25	Aycliffe	Mass: Tommy McGreachen
	2.15	SJSNA	Mass (All Welcome!)
Fri	09.15	Chilton	Mass and Stations of the Cross
20	09.30	Aycliffe	Exposition
Mar	10.00	Aycliffe	Rose McQuillan (10th Anniversary)
	18.30	Aycliffe	Stations of the Cross (Polish)

Next Week-end

Sat	09.30	Coundon	Burns and White Families
21	10.00	Coundon	Exposition and Confessions
Mar	12.00	Aycliffe	Stephen McKenna (RIP)
	16.00	Shildon	Smith and Di Passio families (Mass and Penitential Service)
	18.00	Chilton	Meena Am Bigai (Professed Anniversary)
Sun	09.00	Coundon	Jim and Imelda Crawford
22	10.00	Aycliffe	Our parish family
Mar	10.30	Ferryhill	People of the Parish
	11.00	Aycliffe	Baptism Ralph Patrick Connelly
	12.30	Aycliffe	Polish language mass
	15.00	Ferryhill	Stations of the Cross
	16.00	Coundon	Stations of the Cross
	18.00	Aycliffe	Brogan Stubbs (RIP)

St Mary's Sanctuary Candle this week: **Jackie Piggott**

This week-end: **Gift Aid envelopes** available at the back of St Mary's Church.

Tuesday: **Feast of St Patrick.**

Wednesday, 12 noon at St Thomas: **Lenten Lunch.**

Thursday: Feast of St Joseph. 2.15pm mass at St Joseph's School, Newton Aycliffe. (All welcome!)

Friday: Feast of St Cuthbert