

The theme of joy is traditionally strong on the **3rd Sunday of Advent, called indeed the “Gaudete”** (rejoice), from the entrance song which gives the reason for so much joy: “for the Lord is near”. His presence gives new light and wisdom in faithful’s life and for the social relationships. Pope Francis writes in a missionary document: “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept His offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew” (EG 1). The Christian invitation to hope and joy is a rejection of the prophets of doom: in spite of the adverse signs, the believer can see, throughout the thread of history, the signs of God’s project that is being realised.

In today’s Gospel we see John the Baptist and Jesus: they show two different conceptions about Messiah’s mission. We may compare two ways of understanding the Messiah: a severe judge and social reformer, or a messenger of mercy and acceptance of all? A real doubt, more than understandable, distresses John the Baptist, locked in the dark and lonely prison of Machaerous. The harsh preacher of firing words (remember the Gospel of last Sunday) has his moments of uncertainty. He hears what some people say about Jesus. All were waiting for a different Messiah: a king of power, a leader able to fight against Roman’s Empire... But Jesus seems to prefer a different way... That’s why the John’s question: “Are you the one... or have we got to wait for someone else?” (v. 3). Which is the true identity of Jesus, such a fascinating fellow, but so disconcerting? John is perhaps perturbed because Jesus is too concerned about the poor and the least: He does not condemn or reject anyone, does not destroy sinners, he welcomes everyone, goes to look for the least ones... What type of Messiah is this, if he is the real one?

Many questions and doubts of John! Doubting is something human and honest; believing is impossible without doubts; questions and difficulties in our faith are a part of our hard daily journey. Cardinal Carlo M. Martini, an outstanding archbishop of Milan, said: “In each one of us there are a believer and a non-believer. In each one of us there is a possible atheist who cries out and whispers every day his difficulties to believe.” Not to understand the way God acts or about the meaning of life is a part of our growing towards an adult and mature faith. John is also a model for believers, an example with his passionate search for the Messiah; he is open to a confrontation. —Romeo Ballan mcc

ST. STEPHEN’S PARISH PASTORAL TEAM

Parish Priest/Prison Chaplain: Fr. Gregory E. Umunna Ph.D.

Phone: 01250872171. **Email:** ststephen@dunkelddioocese.org.uk

Address: 8, Bank Street, Blairgowrie, PH10 6DE.

Hall Reservations: Contact no: 01250872171.

Hospital Chaplains: Please call: N/wells Direct line: 07821624124, Hospital Pager 01382660111; **P.R.I:** 01738259371. *Pls let the priest know if you are on a long stay at the hospital and would like a visit.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals: Please make appointment with Priest before any arrangements are made.

Diocese of Dunkeld Scottish Charity No:SC00810

Parish Ministries, Volunteers and Contact Persons:

H/T: St. Stephen’s P. S: Lindsey Smith. Ph: 871950.

Catechist: Mrs. Gail McIntyre.

Parish Safeguarding Coordinator: Mrs Maureen Jackson 07952376985; Email: ststephen-psc@dunkelddioocese.org.uk

Parish Webmaster: Mr. Irek Kawalinski. irekkowalinski@gmail.com

Music Directors: Mr. Tom Buckham and Mrs. Gail McIntyre. (Blair) The Donnelly Family (Alyth)

Responsible Person for Eucharistic Ministers: Mrs Maureen Jackson.

Responsible Person for Children’s Liturgy: Mrs Mary Wojtowicz

Responsible Person for Lectors: Mr. Anthony Jervis (Alyth) Mrs Maureen Jackson.

Responsible Group for Parish Social Justice Issues: SVP

Responsible Person for Church Flowers: Jean Scott (Blair), Mrs Elma Sharp (Alyth)

Resp. Person: Altar Servers: Mr Rolly Colanse

Grounds Flowers: Mrs Jennifer FitzPatrick (Blair)

Responsible Person for St. Luan’s RC Church, Alyth: Daria McDowall: dariam@gmx.com

Adviser on Finance: Mr. Mike Coyle

Adviser on Fabric: Mr. Jim Graham

A team of vibrant Welcomers in St. Luan’s and St. Stephen’s

Wishing you and your loved ones a lovely Sunday -Fr. Gregory

Tear this off please:... Are you going into the hospital? Do you have someone going into the hospital? Would you like him/her/you to be visited with communion, please fill the form below and return to Fr. Gregory.
Name:.....Hospital:..... Date:
Date:.....

Please submit all items for the parish bulletin by 6.00 p.m. on Thursday each week.

Email: peacegreg2002@yahoo.com Phone: 01250 872171



St. Stephen’s R C Church

8 Bank Street, Blairgowrie PH10 6DE, 872171

& St. Luan’s Alyth.

Third (Gaudete) Sunday of Advent Year C, 14/12/25

Parish website: <https://www.st-stephens-blairgowrie.org.uk/>

E-mail: ststephen@dunkelddioocese.org.uk

Scottish Charity No: SC001810



Warm Welcome to all our Parishioners and visitors.

Whether you are visiting our parish or just moved into the area, please feel very welcome ... thanks.

***Our Vision:** To be a welcoming and participating Catholic community on a journey, striving to be led by the Spirit, strengthened by a bond of love and unity, guided by the gospel message of Christ, refreshed and nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharistic table. Enriched by a vibrant people of God from diverse backgrounds and supported by many gifts employed in various ministries and stewardships, we journey together hand-in-hand through life as a community.*

Parish diary: Week beginning from 14/12/25

Saturday - 5.30pm: Vigil mass St. Stephen’s.

Sunday - 9.30 am: Holy mass at St. Luan’s.

Sunday - 11.00am: Holy mass at St. Steph’s.

Monday - 9.00am/1.30pm Masses and Ministry of Care all day in Prisons.

Tues - 10.00am Holy mass at St. Stephens.

Wed - 10.00am Holy mass at St. Luan’s.

--5.00pm-5.45pm: Baptismal Session

- 6.00pm Exposition/Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, St. Stephen

- 7.00pm Holy mass for the Sick at St. Stephen’s.

Thurs - 9.00am/1.30pm Masses and Ministry of Care all day in Prisons.

Friday -10.00am Mass at St. Stephens.

Saturday - 5.30pm: Vigil mass St Stephen’s.

Sunday - 9.30 am: Holy mass at St. Luan’s Alyth.

-Other Participatory Programmes of the Parish.

-Family Rosary and adoration. Every Wednesday 6.00pm-7.00pm. Mass for the sick every Wednesday 7.00pm-7.30pm.

-Sac. of Reconciliation: 5.00pm every Sat and 9am every Sun. **-Divine Mercy Devotion.** Tuesdays after morning mass.

-Please join us. Mass with St. Stephen’s Pri. Sch: 1st Fri. of the month; end of terms and core events masses.

Journeying together in Faith Group - Come and learn the faith we celebrate! Session, Every fortnight. Next Session starts in Feb.2026

Don Bosco Group: with activities tailored to children and young people and open to everyone in the community. 6-7:15pm. Hall. Next session, 19th December.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad

“The central mystery of Christian faith and life is the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (CCC, No. 44).

This Week’s Message in a Glance... Traditionally, this Sunday is called Gaudete Sunday, which means ‘a day for rejoicing’. Advent is about half over, and the day of the Lord’s coming is nearer. We worship God who promises us joy without end.

Kindly remember also those on our prayer list: Michael Rolls, Neil McDowall, Pam McKenna, Mary and George Flockhart, Snooky Marshall, Maud McGinn, Cipriano and Carmelita, Tom O’Malley, Giles Umunna and Tony Donnan, Lisa Robertson, Philip Lafferty, Philip Jackson, Morag McInness, James Jeffrey.

Jubilee Year of Hope: Jubilee for Prisoners.

This weekend, we bring to an end our Jubilee year of Hope celebrations here in St. Stephen’s with the Jubilee for Prisoners. We are delighted to have with us at the 11.00am mass, two eminent and distinguished personalities who have made and still make remarkable contributions to the Scottish Prison Services: **Rev. Graham Bell** who is Advisor to the Prisons representing the Reformed Churches and **Canon Andrew Clark** who retired from the Prison service. Rev Bell will share with us years of experiences of managing brokenness and bringing hope to people at the margins of society.

Introduction to the Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10 Isaiah looks forward to the Day of Joy, when God’s power will be seen on earth. **James 5:7-10** James reminds us to be patient, for the Lord’s coming in glory will be soon. **Matthew 11:2-11** Today’s Gospel tells us that what Isaiah prophesied came to pass in the life of Jesus.

Prayer to light the Third Advent Candle (Gaudete Sunday)

Priest: God of glory and compassion, at your touch the wilderness blossoms.

All: Broken lives are made whole, and fearful hearts grow strong in faith.

Priests: Open our eyes to your presence and awaken our hearts to sing your praise.

Together: To all who long for your Son’s return grant perseverance and patience, that we may announce in word and deed the good news of the kingdom. We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. *(The Third advent candle is lit)*

Foods 4 Thought: These challenging and most difficult Times Require us to LEND A HELPING HAND. Please let us know if you would like somebody to talk to at this difficult time.

"Service is our work too; it makes our talents bear fruit and it gives meaning to our lives. Those who do not live to serve, serve for little in this life. We must repeat this, and repeat it often: those who do not live to serve, serve for little in this life. We should reflect on this: those who do not live to serve, serve for little in this life." —Pope Francis



+ Wilmer Ovenden who passed on and was buried last week in Dunfermline, Fife. Together with her husband Brian, Wilmer was a very faithful lady and worshipped with us here in St. Stephen's.
+ Patricia Rich also passed on and was buried from St. Stephen's last Friday. She was a faithful catholic and lived the faith.
Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

Today's and Up Coming Events:

14th Dec: Poor Mission Fund. Please support it.

- ⇒ 28th Dec: Building maintenance Fund; 11th January: Justice & Peace Collection; 25th January: Building maintenance Fund; Feb. 15th: Ecclesiastical Students Fund; 1st March: Building maintenance Fund. 15th March: SCIAF Sunday; 29th March: Building maintenance Fund. Feb. 18th 2026, Ash Wednesday; 5th April 2026 Easter; 31st May 2026: Confirmation; 7th June 2026 First Holy Communion; 25th/26th June Joint Anniversary Celebrations for St. Luan's and St. Steph's "300 years of Catholicism."
- ⇒ **Join Justice & Peace Scotland** to call for "Dignity Not Detention" and advocate for an end to the inhumane practice of unlimited immigration detention. The UK is the only country in Europe that does not have a statutory time limit on detention, meaning people can be held in prison-like conditions indefinitely with no idea when they will be released. We do so mindful of Pope Leo XIV's recent reaffirmation that we will be judged by how we treat the stranger.
- ⇒ **Don Bosco Group:** The Parish is beginning a programme, Don Bosco Group with activities tailored to children and young people and open to everyone in the community. The aim is to meet every other Friday from 6-7:15pm. St. Stephen's Hall. Next session, 19th December. Basic idea: This project seeks to engage young people with meaningful activities. We Learn skills, Perform tasks, Gain confidence, Grow together and Pray together. In November we can start preparing a quiz/play for a parish Christmas social night. Contact person: Esther Brown sdjbya@gmail.com.
- ⇒ **Altar Servers/Children/Young parishioners Christmas Party:** 22nd December 2025, 6.00pm, Parish Hall. Lots of gifts, music, dance, games, snacks and fun.
- ⇒ **Religious articles Stalls:** The repository is packed for your early shopping for Christmas cards, gift items and other religious items. Please visit stall and enjoy shopping at subsidised prices.
- ⇒ Mill Hill Missionaries will be preaching mission here in St. Stephen's parish in the weekend of 19th of April 2026. Please welcome them.
- ⇒ 14th December (3rd Sunday of Advent) - "On Friday, we commemorated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We ask for the intercession of this patroness of the unborn, saying: 'Let us implore the gift of children for families without children, respect for conceived life and the openness of hearts to Gospel values'. Lord hear us".
- ⇒ 21st December (4th Sunday of Advent) - "Let us pray for all parents expecting a new child, that they might be blessed with a safe and healthy pregnancy for mother and baby. Lord hear us".
- ⇒ 25th December (Midnight Mass of the Nativity of Christ) - "Our Lady said "Yes" to God's plan for her pregnancy, and for the birth of the Child Jesus. Let us pray for all parents experiencing an unexpected pregnancy, that the Lord would give them the necessary graces to repeat Mary's "Yes" for their new child. Lord hear us".
- ⇒ 25th December (Mass of the Day of the Nativity of Christ) - "Let us pray for babies born today and throughout this coming year."

Please submit all items for the parish bulletin by 6.00 p.m. on Thursday each week.

Email: peacegreg2002@yahoo.com

2025 Christmas Mass times for St. Stephen's Church, Blairgowrie and St Luan's Church, Alyth

Wednesday 10th 6.00pm St. Stephen's Primary School Christmas Carol in St. Stephen's Church. Everyone is invited.

Wednesday 17th 10.00am Holy Mass and Reconciliation at St. Luan's Alyth
--6.00pm: Exposition/Adoration, Reconciliation.
--Holy Mass at 7.00pm at St Stephen's

Tuesday 23rd 10.00am: Holy mass at St Stephen's

Wednesday 24th Christmas Vigil:
--5.30 pm: Carol Service followed by Holy mass at St. Stephen's

Thursday 25th - The Nativity of the Lord - Solemnity:
--: St. Luan's 9.30 am: Holy mass at St. Luan's Alyth
--St. Stephen's 11.00am: Holy mass at St. Stephen's

Friday 26th - 10.00am. Feast of St. Stephen. Holy mass at St. Stephen's

Saturday 27th 5.30pm - Vigil Mass of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Feast

Sunday 28th - Mass of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Feast

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Wishing you every grace and peace from heaven above and Healthy and happy New Year.
'Emmanuel - God is with us'

We begin this season of Advent in a spirit of expectation. During this time we look forward not just to the birthday of Jesus at Bethlehem but also for his second coming at the end of time! Advent reawakens hope and longing for a better future. Not just a secure financial future for me or you, but a future of Redemption for the entire people. The scriptural recommendations of Advent try to wake us up and shake us out of our complacency, but they generally end by affirming that all will be resolved by the power and faithfulness of God.

The Eucharist:

As food, do I feel nourished after holy communion? Do I feel a sense of being blessed and graced at the end of each Mass?

As Sacrifice, what have I offered as part of the sacrifice?

As communion, Has the Mass strengthened my identity as a member of this worshipping community?

As thanksgiving, do I give thanks always.

You are never alone: For a shared a prayer, or just have someone listen to you, a candle lit for you or yours, have a mass offered for your intention or that of a loved one living or dead, please speak to the priest.

-Details of Parish account: Name: **St. Stephens RC Blairgowrie.** Account Number: 28075068; Sort Code: 80-22-60.
Last Sunday offertory collection: **£595.56; BMF £379.85.** Many thanks for your support to the parish. *Figures exclude takings from Standing orders, bank transfers and direct debits. Comprehensive Parish Financial Audits and Accounts are published on the Notice Board. Many thanks .



Project Matthew 25: Make the joy of the Christmas season go round. Support the PRISON APOSTOLATE with food and vouchers, canned food, biscuits, chocolates, pastries etc. Collection bag at the back of the church.



St. Stephen's Parish Library.
Selection of Books on:
Spirituality/Prayer
Lives of Saints/Martyr
Theology/philosophy
History/Psychology
Pilgrimage sites
Pls feel free to borrow any from the shelves in the lower hall and return a week after use. Thanks.

Communion to nursing homes,
house bounds and the elderly is part of our ministry of care. Please let any of the Eucharistic Ministers or myself know if you know some-one who is in need of this care.



First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

The registered candidates will have an unbroken six months of preparation for the sacraments.
Venue: Lower Hall.
Days of Catechism: Wednesdays.
Time: 5.30pm.
Attendance at catechism classes and Holy masses by these candidates will be evaluated as by attendance at masses, we become friends of Jesus and get to know him better.
This rule applies across board for all candidates preparing for the sacraments in the whole parish.

Adoration in St. Stephen's, every Wed. 6.00pm-7.00pm. The Eucharist is that love which surpasses all loves in Heaven and on earth." - St. Bernard. Please feel free to join us for adoration.



Christmas Hampers 2025: Christmas Hamper Raffle - Thank you so very much to those who generously donated items for our Christmas Hampers on display at the back of the Church. Raffle tickets are now on sale at £1 each.

Relection: In 1963, the famous Trappist monk and writer Thomas Merton published an essay titled "Advent: Hope or Delusion." His primary focus was to challenge Christians to reflect more deeply on the meaning of authentic Christian hope, especially when many have mistaken such hope for superficial optimism or wishful thinking. He argues that Advent is the season of hope, when we await the coming of Christ not with the naïveté of wishing for a "helicopter god" who will dash in and immediately solve all the world's problems, but with faith in the true God who enters our world as it is and meets us in divine solidarity.

Merton writes: "The fact remains that our task is to seek and find Christ in our world as it is, and not as it might be. The fact that the world is other than it might be does not alter the truth that Christ is present in it and that his plan has been neither frustrated nor changed: indeed, all will be done according to his will. Our Advent is the celebration of this hope. What is uncertain is not the 'coming' of Christ but our own reception of him, our own response to him, our own readiness and capacity to 'go forth and meet Him.'" Merton uses today's gospel to illustrate what this authentic Christian hope looks like in practice. John the Baptist, whom the Christian tradition has long held to be one of the greatest prophets given his proximity to Jesus, is facing an existential crisis: he is in prison and awaiting execution when he begins to doubt whether Jesus is indeed the Christ, the one for whom he has been preparing a way. So, he sends his followers to confront Jesus directly and ask: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" (Matt 11:3). Jesus's response is simple: look around and see for yourself what I am doing!

Merton suggests that John the Baptist and his followers, with their doubts in the face of fear and crisis, serve as stand-ins for our brothers, sisters, and other siblings in the world today. In the midst of crisis, suffering, violence, ecological catastrophe, inequality, and discrimination, the world is asking us—those who profess to be followers of Christ—whether we are serious, whether we are the ones we say we are by virtue of our baptismal promises, or should the world look for another? When we are faced with the needs and cries of our siblings and neighbours, can we say with our words and actions that we are bearing witness to authentic Christian hope by being Christ for others?

Or are we merely talking the talk without walking in practice? The truth is that Christ continues to come into this messed up and broken world as it is, but he does so today through his mystical body, which is all the faithful. During this season of Advent, of authentic Christian hope, it is up to us to demonstrate that hope through our deeds, so that we may, like Jesus before us, confidently ask the world: "what do you see and hear?" Christmas is right around the corner, but the world still waits for us to give birth to Christ through our words and deeds.

—Reflections from: U.S. Catholic

Parish Website: www.st-stephens-blairgowrie.org.uk

Diocese of Dunkeld Scottish Charity No: