

The sign that God revealed to us on this last Sunday of Advent is highly significant. God's choice of the messiah was from the house of David. However, Mary's child belongs to all nations. So, we all form part of the nations. This is through God's love, and his invitation to share in the Christ's heritage. Hence, Christ is coming for the sake of all of us.

In the first reading of this Sunday, God gave us the greatest and most definitive signs about the Messiah: "A maiden is with child, and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Emmanuel, which means God is with us!" It is important to note that this sign was given to king Ahaz only after he humbled himself by refusing to put God to test.

Hence the lessons here include that, we must allow God to be God without trying to pre-empt him. Second, we must learn to trust in God's judgment, and his good will for us. Third, we need not run after signs anymore because, God has given us the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ. The fourth, is that, if we humble ourselves, God will reveal to us, "the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ" (Eph 1, 9).

Both the second reading and the gospel of today are narratives about the birth and life of Christ. They remind us that the signs that God gave to us through the prophets, (that is, the signs which are the foundation of our hope this season), are not flatus vocis (empty words). Rather, they are true and fulfilled in Christ.

Hence, in the second reading, Paul reminds us of the promises that came through the words of the prophets. Here, he highlighted three very important facts. First, he reminds us of Christ's divine origin and nature: "This is the good news about Christ, the son of God." Second, he reminds us of Christ's human origin and nature: "...Who according to the human nature he took was from the descendant of David..." All these were to assure us that Christ is really the promised Messiah. The third fact is about our relationship to Christ. That is, how we fit into God's plan, and his economy of salvation: "You are one such nations, and by his call belong to Jesus Christ." Through this, Paul reminds us of our heritage Christ.

In today's gospel, Matthew narrates "how Jesus was born." Like Paul, Matthew in his infancy narrative traced Jesus' lineage back to the dynasty of king David. This is also meant to assure us (as Paul did), that Jesus is really the promised messiah. In this narrative, Mathew highlighted the very important and central role played by Mary and Joseph. They were God's instruments for fulfilling His mission of salvation for us. This teaches us that God is active in our history and lives, and that He comes to us through human instruments.

Finally, as we expect the coming of the Messiah, each one of us must make himself available as a worthy instrument. We must be ready to cooperate with God as Mary and Joseph did, in order that the promises of God might be fulfilled through us. Also, we have to allow ourselves to be instruments through which God could save humanity. So, in whatever capacity God calls us to participate in the economy of salvation, let us cooperate with him as Mary and Joseph did today. Fr. Canice



## St. Stephen's R C Church

8 Bank Street, Blairgowrie Ph10 6DE, 872171

& St. Luan's Alyth.

Fourth Sunday of Advent Year C, 21/12/25

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

E-mail: [ststephen@dunkelddioecese.org.uk](mailto:ststephen@dunkelddioecese.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 21/12/25

**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. **With Baptism of Chyra Bello**

**Monday** - 10.30am/1.30pm Masses and Ministry of Care all day in Prisons.

**Tues** - 10.00am Holy mass at St. Stephens. **With Baptism of Matteo Motion**

**Wed** - 10.00am Holy mass at St. Luan's.

**Season of Christmas:** -5.30pm: Christmas Vigil beginning with Carol Service

followed by Holy mass at St. Stephen's

**Thurs** - The Nativity of the Lord - Solemnity and Holy Day of Obligation

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

-- 11.00am: Holy mass at St. Stephen's

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

**Saturday:** 5.30pm - Vigil Mass of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Feast

**Sunday:** Mass of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Feast

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

-11.00am: Holy mass at St. Stephen's.

### -Other Participatory Programmes of the Parish from the New Year

**-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, 16th January 2026.

*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...** "Emmanu-El, God-with-us. The promise that God is with us was not for Isaiah's time only, it is for our own. Even now the sign of that continuing presence is a young woman and her child, the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus. For Joseph the unexpected pregnancy of Mary was not a sign to confirm his trust either in her or God, it was a contradictory sign. In the hours of his darkness he found the enlightening Spirit of God.

**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.

### Opening Prayer:

Eternal God, in the psalms of David, in the words of the prophets, in the dream of Joseph your promise is spoken. At last, in the womb of the Virgin Mary your Word takes flesh. Teach us to welcome Jesus, the promised Emmanuel, and to preach the good news of his coming, that every age may know him as the source of redemption and grace. Grant 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.

### Introduction to the Scripture Readings

Isaiah 7:10-16 Contains Isaiah's prophecy of the events we celebrate at Christmas - words repeated in today's Gospel. Romans 1:1-7 Paul begins his letter to the Romans by summing up the message of Advent and Christmas. Matthew 1:18-24 Matthew recalls some events that happened before the birth of Jesus.

**The Season of Advent ends on Wednesday next,** so the celebration of the birth of Christ is now very close. We gather in preparation for that great event, worshipping God who was made flesh to bring us to glory. Preceded only in importance by the celebration of the paschal mystery, the church has no more ancient a tradition than the celebration of the Christmas season: from Jesus' humble birth in Bethlehem; the announcement of his birth to the shepherds by the angels; the revelation to the Magi and their subsequent adoration of the child; his baptism in the River Jordan and the Father's declaration of Jesus as "Beloved Son" and the beginning of his public ministry. The other feasts of the Christmastime (St. Stephen, St John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God) all have an intimate connection to the Lord's manifestation.

### ST. STEPHEN'S PARISH PASTORAL TEAM

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

**Phone:** 01250872171. **Email:** [ststephen@dunkelddioecese.org.uk](mailto:ststephen@dunkelddioecese.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: [ststephenpsc@dunkelddioecese.org.uk](mailto:ststephenpsc@dunkelddioecese.org.uk)

**Parish Webmaster:** Mr. Irek Kawalinski. [irekkowalinski@gmail.com](mailto:irekkowalinski@gmail.com)

**Music Directors:** Mr. Tom Buckingham 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](mailto: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 merry Christmas and a happy new year**  
**-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](mailto:peacegreg2002@yahoo.com) Phone: 01250 872171

**Information on Annual Leave:** I wish to inform all our parishioners that I hope to be away from the parish for my annual leave from Wednesday the 31st of December to Saturday the 31st of January 2026. During this period, I will be able to stay close to my siblings and manage some rest away from parish settings. Please give our usual warm welcome to **Fr. Elias or any of the Redemptorist Fathers in Kinnoull. 07378648048/01738624075** who has gladly accepted to cover the Sunday masses which will be limited to 9.30am in St. Luan's Alyth and 11.00am in St. Stephen's Blairgowrie. In the case of an emergency, he could be contacted.

As we successfully arrive to the end of 2025, I give thanks to the almighty God in "in whom we live and move and have our being" and offer my deepest appreciations to all our parishioners - children, young and not so young—for all your unflinching support to the parish throughout 2025. Because of your faith, your support and participation, our parish family is alive, flourishing, stable and focused.

As a parish community, 2025 was significantly spiritually and pastorally nourishing as we anchored on Pope Francis' **Jubilee Year of Hope** and celebrated the various aspect of society in their efforts to offer hope. We started the **Journeying together in Faith Group** as we gather every fortnight and learn about the faith we celebrate! We also started the **Don Bosco Group** to provide a safe space for children and young people of the parish to learn and grow together. We sustained our usual **Wednesday exposition of the Blessed sacrament and adoration, regular weekly mass for the sick, confessions, sick calls, visit to the house bounds, infant baptisms, First Holy Communion, Confirmations, regular Sunday and weekday masses in St. Stephen's and St. Luan's and befitting funeral services to our beloved dead parishioners.** This year we **completed the resurfacing of the grounds/parking spaces in St. Stephen's** and continued to make sure that the **presbytery** and our two lovely **churches** are structurally sound and well looked after. Our vibrant **altar servers** are remaining strong and engaging us with their faith not only **on the altar** but also with **regular concerts.** In view of our proposed joint celebration of our **"300 years of Catholicism"** (St. Stephens 175th & St. Luans 125th) we have set up committees which have met 3x to stir the programmes successfully and plans are ongoing. In 2025 **prison care and apostolate** was added to my tasks. We have had two visits from **Bishop Andrew McKenzie** and visits of **missionary priests on mission.**

May 2026 usher in for us all, a blessed, healthier, happier and more prosperous individual and parish family lives. I commend our whole parish and my journey to the powerful intercessions of the Blessed Virgin Mary the mediatrix of all graces and to your prayerful support. With all my love, **—Fr. Gregory**

**PHILIP** **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

- ⇒ **Today's and Up Coming Events:**
- ⇒ 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. Stephen'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, 16th January. 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.
- ⇒ Children's Liturgy: I want to thank Mary Wojtowicz and her team of Liturgists for the wonderful work they do for us and I encourage the parents to please
- ⇒ **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 chopping 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.

Please submit all items for the parish bulletin by 6.00 p.m. on Thursday each week.  
Email: [peacegreg2002@yahoo.com](mailto:peacegreg2002@yahoo.com) Phone: 01250 872171



## 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" – Fr. Gregory**

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: 280750688; Sort Code: 80-22-60.  
**Last Sunday offertory collection: £428; Poor Mission Fund £241.** 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.

**Adoration in St. Stephen's, every Wed. 6.00pm-7.00pm To resume from February 2026.** "The Eucharist is that love which surpasses all loves in Heaven and on earth." - St. Bernard.  
Please feel free to join us for adoration.

**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.

God comes into the world not in worldly glamour, magnificence, or majesty but in the powerlessness and vulnerability of an infant as well as in lack of material comfort. Emmanuel

**Christmas Hampers 2025:**  
Hampers raffle tickets sales ongoing this Sunday. Last chance to try your luck to go home with the lovely pack.



## Reflection:

Finally, on this the Fourth Sunday of Advent, our Gospel Reading permits us to begin our contemplation of the mystery of the incarnation we celebrate at Christmas: "Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about" (Matthew 1:18).

The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus from Joseph's perspective. Today's Gospel passage is the second movement in this story. In the preceding verses of the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel, the Evangelist has listed the genealogy of Jesus, tracing his lineage through King David to Abraham. In the chapter to follow, Matthew tells of the visit from the Magi, the Holy Family's flight into Egypt, and Herod's massacre of the infants in Bethlehem. (The other stories which we associate with Christmas, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the angel and the shepherds, are found in the Gospel of Luke).

We must not gloss over too quickly the difficult circumstances described in today's Gospel. The way that Joseph and Mary face these circumstances tells us much about these holy people and their faith in God. Joseph and Mary are betrothed to be married. This is sometimes described as an engagement period, but it is more than that. Betrothal in first century Jewish culture was in fact the first part of the marriage contract. A breach of this contract was considered adultery. Mary is found to be with child. If adultery is proven, the punishment might be death. Joseph has rights under Mosaic law, but chooses to act discreetly in his plans to break the marriage contract, so as to protect Mary. Then God intervenes.

The message of the angel of the Lord given to Joseph in his dream tells us much about the child that Mary bears and his role in God's plan. He is conceived by the Holy Spirit. His name will be Jesus, which in the Hebrew means "Yahweh saves." He will be the fulfilment of the prophecy heard in today's first reading from Isaiah: "... the virgin shall be with child . . . and shall name him Emmanuel [God with us]."

Joseph does as the angel of the Lord directs. He takes Mary to be his wife and accepts the child in her womb as his own. Joseph and Mary are both cooperative with God's plan. They are both models for us of what it means to be faithful servants of God.

—Reflection from: Loyola Press



**Christmas Party for our dedicated altar Servers.**  
Date: Dec.22nd, 6pm.Venue: Parish Hall. Please support our boys and girls. Contact Person for Altar Servers: Mr. Rolly