



GOD CHOSE  
WHAT IS  
WEAK IN  
THE WORLD

# OUR COMMUNITY NEWS

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SHINE . . .  
YOU ARE  
THE LIGHT  
OF WORLD

## 1st February 2026 : "Blessed are . . ."

Dear Friends,

On Monday we celebrate the *Feast of the Presentation (Candlemas)* and it is the time I always put away my Christmas nativity scene. Actually, I do have another mini crib scene on my piano that remains all year round (very fragile now - made over 40 years ago out of matchsticks, a slate base and an assortment of items and materials I collected on country walks). But, even though I do still have this mini nativity on constant display, I shall still find putting away the larger seasonal crib figures quite sad.

My youngest grandson (3 years) was quite distraught when his mum took down their Christmas tree and decorations at New Year. "She did it!" he had said in an accusatory tone with pointed finger, when he recalled to me what he perceived as a tragic event - so I know he will be sad to see the disappearance of figures that had been a familiar constant in my house over this past Christmas season. I shall, of course, reassure him that Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus and friends, will be making an appearance again in around another 290 days, when he can help me carefully unwrap and display the figures for next Christmas. He should understand a little more then as he'll be four and hopefully have settled into 'big' school life.

As with putting away the Christmas tree decorations, when I wrap each figure I am reflecting on the changes in my life, my family and the world, since I last performed the little ritual and wonder at what this next year will bring? Much has changed during 2025, in all areas of my life - family, friends, Watermead - as I'm sure for those of you reading. Most initiatives from our Watermead apostolate are now beginning to settle into their new locations, moving in new directions, and I am moving forward on various projects - including 'From Splot to Eternity', Fr John's autobiography (I have nearly completed the final edit and page-setting, ready for its final proof-read).

I am also trying to finalise our Rome pilgrimage, to include a few days in Assisi (see over the page), and details of this should be confirmed within the next few days. I would love to arrange other pilgrimages at home and abroad (I've been asked about Lourdes and Malta, especially), but we will have to wait and see how the Rome/Assisi arrangements go first.

In a couple of weeks we celebrate the *Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes* and I remember back to 2001 and being in Rome for the occasion of that feast. I had unfortunately been ill on my arrival in Rome and spent my first day in hospital, followed by confinement in the convent for the next few days whilst antibiotics sorted out the pleurisy responsible for my embarrassing collapse on our descent into Rome airport. Pope John Paul II would later be celebrating mass in St Peter's basilica on the feast day, primarily for the sick and infirm, and our host Sisters thought it would be good for me to go. We struggled through security and the guards found me a seat at the front near the Papal Altar and I was included in the blessing of the sick personally by the Pope.

A wonderful memory and also reminiscent of my first pilgrimage to Rome in 1994, as the blessing of the sick was the second blessing I had received from Pope John Paul. On that pilgrimage I had received his blessing, for myself and our Watermead Apostolate, when I was introduced to him to present him with our first Watermead Music project - the recording 'Our songs Give Praise'.

What a blessing our memories can be. In a world full of much turmoil and uncertainty, it is good to be able to reflect back on happy occasions and events in our lives, on those special people we know and have known, on scenic places we may have visited - in prayerful gratitude for all they have meant to us.

## SUNDAY READINGS REFERENCE

1st FEBRUARY 2026

4th Sunday of Year A (Prayer Week 4)

For a background to all the readings each Sunday see Watermead's *The Lord's Day* newsletter from <https://www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk/the-lords-day>

The bible references for this week are as follows:

1st reading: **Zephaniah 2:3,12-13**

2nd reading: **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

Gospel according to **Matthew 5:1-12a**

## WEEKDAY READINGS REFERENCE

4th Week of Year II

**Mon:** Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Malachi 3:1-4 Hebrews 2:14-18 Luke 2:22-40

**Tue:** 2 Samuel 18:9-10,14,24-25,30-19:3 Mark 5:21-43

**Wed:** 2 Samuel 24:2,9-17 Mark 6:1-6

**Thu:** 1 Kings 2:1-4,10-12 Mark 6:7-13

**Fri:** Sirach 47:2-11 Mark 6:14-29

**Sat:** 1 Kings 3:4-13 Mark 6:30-34

## NEXT SUNDAY READINGS REFERENCE

8th FEBRUARY 2026

5th Sunday of Year A (Prayer Week 1)

The bible references are as follows:

1st reading: **Isaiah 58:7-10**

2nd reading: **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

Gospel according to **Matthew 5:13-16**

## WEEKDAY READINGS REFERENCE

5th Week of Year II

**Mon:** 1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13 Mark 6:53-36

**Tue:** 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30 Mark 7:1-13

**Wed:** 1 Kings 10:1-10 Mark 7:14-23

**Thu:** 1 Kings 11:29-32, 12:19 Mark 7:31-37

**Fri:** 1 Kings 12:26-32, 13:33-34 Mark 8:1-10

**Universalis** is a free online resource that you may find useful to obtain the daily readings at mass, along with the Office of Readings and various other resources - click here to see the version for England.

"Love one another and watch how you grow."  
attributed to St Scholastica

## Focus on Saints & Feasts

Monday (2nd February)  
Presentation of the Lord  
(Candlemass Day)

Saturday (6th February)  
Ss Paul Mikki  
& Companions

Tuesday (3rd February)  
St Blaise : St Ansgar

Tuesday (10th February)  
St Scholastica

Thursday (5th February)  
St Agatha

Wednesday (11th February)  
Our Lady of Lourdes

Saturday (14th February)  
St Cyril & St Methodius

# Prayer Box



*This week we especially remember in prayer  
All killed in conflicts around the world (RIP)*

Ann, Angie, Philomena, Sister Lelia, Anna, Oisin,  
Mary, John, Catherine, Don, John, Matthew,  
Iain, Paul, Pauline & Christine, Peter, Rosie, Susan,  
Sylvia, Toni, Judy, Winefride, Joy

Kate and Gerry and all Madeleine McCann's family  
and for all families of missing children.

For all affected by the devastating floods in the UK;  
Those who have suffered standing up for justice  
around the world (Iran, Mineapolis,

And all affected by conflicts around the world  
especially Ukraine Myanmar, Sudan, Palestine, Ukraine

Please email your reminders & additional names for prayers  
[watermead-community@outlook.com](mailto:watermead-community@outlook.com)

## An Alternative Valentine 14 February : St Cyril & Methodius Day

On 14th February letter boxes, email inboxes, social media, etc. might be being watched eagerly for Valentine cards and messages - but this saint, sometimes said to be the Christian 'cupid', was dropped from various church calendars many years ago. The legend (or hagiography) says that Valentine was believed to have been a priest in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Claudius II, around 270 AD, and was famously known for defying the emperor's orders by performing secret marriages for Christian couples - against the law at the time, because it was believed that young men made better soldiers if they weren't married. Research gives many stories about saints named Valentine, with no proof of who is the saint for 14th February - although there are various relics on display around Europe and the UK, including a skull in the church of *Santa Maria in Cosmedin* in Rome.

St Valentine was apparently removed from the General Roman Calendar in 1969 under Pope Paul VI, due to a lack of reliable information and now the saints Cyril and Methodius replaced him on 14th February.

But who are they? They were two brothers who lived in the 9th Century. They brought Christianity to the Southern Slavonic peoples and were venerated as the patron saints of the former country of Yugoslavia and state of Czechoslovakia. In 1980 they were declared patron saints of Europe by Pope John Paul II (himself a Slav), joining St Benedict, and thus symbolising the unity of Europe, East and West. Their feast day is 14th February as Cyril died the on on the 14th February 869 and was buried in the church of *St Clement* on the Coelian Hill. Methodius, after some more years of missionary work, was buried alongside his brother.



*Watermead named the little mice in the "Little Saints" cartoon cards, Cyril and Methodius, after these two 9th century saints, and even designed them an alternative 'Valentine' card for the 14th February. This could be viewed as slightly irreverent, but it was just a bit of fun that became a welcome distraction card for those not sending or expecting a Valentine.*



**A Warm Welcome**  
**EVERY FRIDAY 11.30 AM - 1.30 PM**  
at the Immaculate Conception Church Hall  
54 New Street, Oadby LE2 4LJ

All are welcome regardless of age, background or interests,  
to come and share warmth, company, activities, guest speakers.

## CHURCH & WORLD NEWS

**World Day of the Sick** On the **Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes** (Wednesday 11th February) we also share **World Day of the Sick**, established by St. John Paul II in 1992, intended to remind people to reflect on the face of Christ in our sick and vulnerable brothers and sisters. This year Pope Leo has chosen the theme of "The Good Samaritan."

For more information click here . . .

### Dominicans in Minneapolis on the front lines

Dominican Sr Margaret McGuirk and three associates are on the front lines, bringing food to immigrant families hiding in their apartments, providing legal aid to immigrants in the process of gaining permanent residency, giving rides to Latino teachers afraid to go to work, and helping pay the rent or utility bills for those unable to leave their homes for fear of arrest and deportation. Their story is inspiring . . .

Read the full NCR article here . . .

### Sarah Mullally confirmed as Archbishop of Canterbury

The Confirmation of Election service for the first woman to lead the Church of England took place last Wednesday 28th January and marks a major milestone for the Church, which ordained its first female priests in 1994 and its first female bishop in 2015. . . .

Read the NCR report on the service . . .

Read the report from the Archbishop's website . . .

**Choose Peace over Chaos** With global tensions rising and "reckless actions" triggering dangerous consequences, UN Secretary-General António Guterres yesterday called for renewed efforts on peace, justice and sustainable development as he outlined his priorities for 2026 - the final year of his tenure. "2026 is already shaping up to be a year of constant surprises and chaos"

Read Guterres' inspiring words of caution . . .

### Pope releases prayer intentions for 2027

*Human dignity, art, life, migrants, the elderly, young people, and artificial intelligence:* are some of the themes of the prayer intentions that Pope Leo has entrusted to his Worldwide Prayer Network for next year. For each month of that year, the Pope will invite the Church to pray for a specific intention, touching on both global challenges and issues within the life of the Church. These prayer intentions were entrusted to the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network in an audience on Friday morning.

To see the full list month by month click here . . .

### A sign of hope and unity in Bethlehem

In Bethlehem, everything is ready to begin the restoration works of the Grotto of the Nativity, occurring for the first time in 600 years. The announcement was made jointly by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custody of the Holy Land. The initiative also involves the co-operation of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate and is carried out under the auspices of the Presidency of the State of Palestine.

Read more on the restoration of Bethlehem's Grotto . . .

### Blessing of St Blaise

One of the memories I have of Fr John (and many Rosminian priests who served my childhood parish) is that on the 3rd February each year there would be the blessing of throats: a ritual begun in the 15th century and attributed to Blaise, a physician, who cured a young boy of a lodged fish bone. I'm not sure of the connection with the Rosminians, other than it seemed they introduced the parish to the blessing.

"Through the intercession of  
St Blaise, bishop and martyr,  
may God deliver you from  
every disease of the throat and  
from every other illness.  
In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit."



## DATES FOR DIARY

### Root and Branch Community

#### A Divine Calling

**Thursday 12th February, 8.00 pm** (UK time)

*Soline Humbert in conversation with Mary McAleese talking about her life-long battle for equality in the Catholic Church.*

#### Opus Dei uncovered

**Thursday 12th March, 8.00 pm** (UK time)

(more details later and on R&B website)

**Thursday 26th March, 8.00 pm** (UK time)

A date to save. There will be details later.

For more details, world times and to book, visit the R&B website

<https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/>

These evenings are always good and informative and are provided free of charge! Do consider attending

"Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry,  
a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of  
constant happiness, a protection against sadness"

St John Chrysostom

## Watermead

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which also shares our free download resources.

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## → Pilgrimages for 2026 →

### LATEST UPDATE

### ROME/ASSISI ~ 21-28 NOVEMBER 2026

(4 nights in Rome and 3 nights in Assisi)

It looks as if November is going to be the best time financially to fit our Rome and Assisi pilgrimage together. The above dates are provisionally booked with our hotels and flight timetables from Stansted (Manchester) verified. Prices will be confirmed as soon as there is viable interest. If you are interested please advise us as soon as possible as places are going to be limited (36 in total).

The deposit, once details are confirmed, will be £500 to secure a place. Already 11 people have contacted us.

### UK PILGRIMAGES

Once the above pilgrimages are finalised we shall know available dates to start exploring these options (Liverpool, York, Iona, Glastonbury - amongst suggestions) Keep watching this space for further details

For further information on both of the above pilgrimages Contact us via our website - or watch this newsheet.

For more general information on pilgrimages please do visit our pilgrimage page and read the conditions of travelling with us.

<https://www.watermeadapostolate.co.uk/pilgrimages>

## Last word from Fr John

**SUBSCRIBE TO ALL RECORDINGS** After editing, all new recordings are uploaded onto our update page. If you would like to join Fr John's homilies' page then contact [watermead-community@outlook.co.uk](mailto:watermead-community@outlook.co.uk) with your email address for subscription.

You can then listen back to all recordings.

For all information and the latest featured homily visit: **The Lord's Day** page of our website.

