

# OUR COMMUNITY NEWS

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"For dust  
you are, and  
to dust you  
shall return"  
Genesis 3:19



## 15th February 2026 : "Wednesday begins our Lenten journey . . ."

Dear Friends,

Hard to believe that Lent is here again and this Wednesday is another chance to witness to our beliefs by bearing a smudged ash cross on our foreheads. I remember last year wondering why everyone was giving me confused looks as I navigated the supermarket, until a lady at the checkout finally asked me if I knew I had some 'dirt' on my face. Some dirt! I had gone there straight from morning mass and forgotten it was there. I suppose her observation was correct as it did look like a dirty smudge, but, even when I explained I'd just come from our Ash Wednesday mass, I realised she hadn't a clue what I was talking about.

In our multi-cultural city we tolerate each other's religious traditions, but we do not know much about them. I suppose this is because we Catholics are also very much in the minority now, and very rarely do Christian traditions speak from television or radio, beyond the token 'Songs of Praise' or 'Morning Service' programmes. I remember someone not of our faith once telling me that they thought being marked with 'ashes' was a very morbid tradition as it reminded people that one day they too will be ash, whether this be by immediate cremation or gradual decay.

I do personally find the tradition quite reassuring as it reminds us that our human body is only the temporary vessel of what is to be a much greater future existence. We came from the earth - 'adamah' being the Hebrew word for earth/soil/ground/land (reflected by the name *Adam*, given to the bible's mythical first man) - we live off what the earth produces and, when our bodies have cultivated the potential of our spirit, they return to the earth.

I remember being fascinated by the imagery, when I first understood Ash Wednesday's mark as the symbolic interpretation of our beginnings, our journey and our destination. I was also pleased to realise with this understanding that I was vindicated from my eight-year-old self having received a teacher's reprimand for asking how Cain could go and marry a woman from the land of Nod when his parents were the first humans on earth. Even more revealing and inspiring was being told the Hebrew name later given to the woman of creation being *Eve (Chavah)*, translated as "live-giver" or "mother of all life," a fitting reference to woman's role in creation and evolution, nurturing life from seed and birthing that life into our world.

I do now find it very sad that questions in my day were not encouraged when our young minds were inquisitive, eager to learn. So many adults of my generation stopped exploring their faith and asking those questions as they got older, and their recall of the bible's story of creation is now only down to Adam, Eve, an apple, a serpent, and one brother killing the other (Cain and Abel). It's a start, I suppose, but interest in further exploration of this seeming fanciful story sadly wanes as living life takes over.

On checking my Sunday missal I see that the first Sunday of Lent has an introduction referring to *Satan* (another name that needs exploration and explanation for fuller understanding), along with reference to Adam and Eve, and the warning that Lent is a time of "spiritual warfare" (not a good term!).

A war (battle) with whom - Satan, ourselves, sin? So much of my Catholic indoctrination relied initially on a frightening fear of 'sinning'. I don't like seeing these references or that word and today, prefer to use the phrase 'wrong-doing' as this does not condure up the black mark of Original Sin that we thought as children was forever within us, a dark shadow on our soul that could not be removed and that we had to spend our lives atoning for.

My Lent will be a revaluation of how I live my life and how that living affects those around me and the world I live in. What will yours be? Over the page you will see how Artificial Intelligence evaluates the Lenten journey along with an explanation of Wednesday's ashes - you might like to use for anyone who comments on your (dirty) mark!

## SUNDAY READINGS REFERENCE

15th FEBRUARY 2026

### 6th Sunday of Year A (Prayer Week 2)

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: **Sirach 15:15-20**

2nd reading: 1 **Corinthians 2:6-10**

Gospel according to **Matthew 5:17-37**

## WEEKDAY READINGS REFERENCE

6th Week of Year II

Mon: James 1:11-11 Mark 8:11-13

Tue: James 1:12-18 Mark 8:14-21

Lent begins

**Ash Wednesday:**

Joel 2:12-18 2 Corinthians 5:20 - 6:2 Matthew 6:1-6,16-18

Thu: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Luke 9:22-25

Fri: Isaiah 58:1-9 Matthew 9:14-15

Sat: Isaiah 58:9-14 Luke 5:27-32

## NEXT SUNDAY READINGS REFERENCE

22nd FEBRUARY 2026

### 1st Sunday of Lent (A) (Prayer Week 1)

The bible references are as follows:

1st reading: **Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7**

2nd reading: **Romans 5:12-19**

Gospel according to **Matthew 4:1-11**

## WEEKDAY READINGS REFERENCE

1st Week of Lent

Mon: Leviticus 19:1-2,11-18 Matthew 25:31-46

Tue: Isaiah 55:10-11 Matthew 6:7-15

Wed: Jonah 3:1-10 Luke 11:29-32

Thu: Esther C:12,14-16,23-25 Matthew 7:7-12

Fri: Ezekiel 18:21-28 Matthew 5:20-26

Sat: Deuteronomy 26:16-19 Matthew 5:43-48

**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.

## Focus on Saints & Feasts

Tuesday (17th February) Seven Servite Founders	Monday (23rd February) St Polycarp
Wednesday (18th February) ASH WEDNESDAY	Friday (27th February) St Gabriel St Gregory of Narek
Saturday 21st February) St Peter Damian	Saturday (28th February) St Oswald

**ORIGINAL SIN** - If you have not read the explanation by **Fr John** it can be found on our website under 'Voices' or [click here](#)

# Prayer Box



*This week we especially remember in prayer*  
Those victims of the gun shooting in Canada (RIP)

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

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

The victims and all affected by shooting in Canada; For all affected by the devastating floods in the UK; And all affected by conflicts around the world especially Ukraine, Myanmar, Sudan, Palestine, Nigeria

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

## Lent 'Give-ups' according to AI

As an exercise to challenge AI's (Artificial Intelligence) knowledge of religious and seasonal traditions, I asked co-pilot how I could make Lent meaningful? In less than five seconds the answer came, with interesting and creative ideas - no doubt collected from various website resources on the internet. Below are the results - a mix of things to give up and also things to take on, not just sacrifice suggestions but also growth and self renewal.

### Meaningful Things to Give Up

*Digital clutter -*

Limit social media scrolling or set "phone-free" hours.

*Negative self-talk -*

Replace each critical thought with a word of gratitude.

*Impulse spending -*

Only buy essentials and donate the savings.

*Mindless snacking -*

Use the craving as time for a short prayer or reflection.

*Complaining -*

Commit to speaking only words that build up.

### Positive Practices to Take On

*Keep a daily gratitude journal -*

Write down three blessings each day.

*Acts of kindness -*

Do one intentional good deed daily, even if small.

*Scripture or spiritual reading -*

Dedicate 10 -15 minutes each morning.

*Volunteer work -*

Serve at a food bank, shelter, or community project.

*Prayer walks -*

Combine light exercise with mindful reflection.

### Creative Spiritual Challenges

*Declutter 40 items in 40 days -*

Give away or donate what you don't need.

*Write letters -*

to friends, family, those in need of encouragement.

*Fast from multitasking -*

Practice being fully present in each moment.

*Include a daily sunrise or sunset reflection -*

Pause to appreciate creation daily.

AI also offered to create a more personal daily plan structuring the above three sections into the 40 days of Lent - again, very interesting and challenging.



**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.

## Why Ashes? ~ Why Lent?

On Wednesday we celebrate Ash Wednesday, marking the official start of Lent. The date always falls 46 days before Easter Sunday, and is variable each year (between 4th February and 10th March) because it is decided according to the Lunar calendar.

When the ashes are placed on our foreheads it is to remind us of the origin of our humanity, formed by God from the dust of the earth (*Genesis 2:7*) and the conclusion of our human journey (*Genesis 3:19*) - "*For you are dust, and you shall return to dust*"

The ashes used in the service traditionally came from the burning of the palms used in the previous year's Palm Sunday celebrations (when Jesus is remembered riding on a donkey into Jerusalem, welcome by crowds waving palms). This ash, then mixed with a small amount of water or oil to create a paste, is applied to the foreheads of worshippers in the shape of a cross as a symbol of Jesus death (our mortality) and resurrection (our promise of eternal life).

The tradition is not mentioned in the Bible but developed over time, starting with the Council of Nicaea, which established a 40-day fasting period before Easter. It was Pope Gregory, in the fifth century, that moved the beginning of Lent from a Sunday to Ash Wednesday.

Lent is the opportunity for all to reflect on the lives they are living, how we impact on each and the world around us and, most importantly for Christians, our relationship with God - a wilderness time mirroring the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and undergoing temptations, preparing for his ministry (as told in the Gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke). His victory can be a powerful reminder that we can rely on God's Word and strength in our own struggles, too.

Lent is therefore a time of self-reflection, letting go of distractions, drawing closer to God preparing for Easter, the celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

## CHURCH & WORLD NEWS

**Pope's Lenten message "Abstain from harsh words and rash judgement"** Ahead of the start of Lent, Pope Leo XIV invites us to open ourselves to listening, fasting, and community, urging us to abstain from words of hatred in order to make space for words of hope and peace . . .

**For more information click here . . .**

**The Most Reverend Richard Moth** was installed as the twelfth Archbishop of Westminster on Saturday, 14th February at 12 noon in Westminster Cathedral. Visit the Bishops of England and Wales website for a link to details of the Installation video, the Order of Service and text of the Archbishop's Homily.

**Visit the Bishops of England and Wales website . . .**

**Happy Birthday Vatican Radio!** Thursday 12th February marked the 95th anniversary of Vatican Radio, a pioneering voice in global broadcasting and one of the Church's most historic media institutions. It was established on 12th February 1931 by Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of wireless telegraphy, at the request of Pope Pius XI. Its mission began with the first papal radio message. Marconi's daughter, Princess Elettra Marconi, has dedicated her life to promoting her father's legacy and for the 95th anniversary the Vatican News Channel shares an interview with her.

**Click here for transcript plus links to interview . . .**

**Epstein files reveal ties to Catholic conservatives' anti-Francis campaign** Newly released files by the U.S. Department of Justice show that convicted sex offender and financier Jeffrey Epstein and former Trump aide Steve Bannon discussed strategies to undermine Pope Francis, revealing how the Vatican was viewed as a geopolitical pressure point by Epstein's network of political and financial leaders . . .

**Read the NCR report . . .**

## DATES FOR DIARY

### Root and Branch Community

*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 creative evening of music, word, reflection to which all are invited*

*For more details, world times and to book, visit the R&B website*  
<https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/>

## Pilgrim Cross

Pilgrim Cross is an Easter pilgrimage for all ages that walks every year to Walsingham, living and walking in community for one, three or seven days before spending the weekend celebrating Easter in the ruins of Walsingham Abbey. The pilgrimage is an opportunity to step out of the busyness of everyday life for a week and just be, a way of celebrating Easter making friendships that can last a lifetime. Whether looking to deepen faith, find fellowship with friends, or just take some time to think whilst walking, all are welcome on Pilgrim Cross. *For more information visit* <https://pilgrimcross.org.uk/>

## Watermead

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or use the 'Contact Us' on the apostolate website

[www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk/](http://www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk/)

*which also shares our free download resources.*

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## → Pilgrimages for 2026 →

### ROME/ASSISI CONFIRMED

**21-28 NOVEMBER 2026**

**(4 nights in Rome and 3 nights in Assisi)**

November is the best time financially to fit our

Rome and Assisi pilgrimage together.

The above dates are now booked with our hotels and flight timetables from Stansted (Manchester) verified.

Prices will be announced this coming week and once we have these figures a deposit of **£500** secures a place.

If you are interested please email us as soon as possible as places are going to be limited (**36** in total).

Already **28** people have confirmed their intention to come.

### 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.*

