HIGH TIDE

Parish Magazine

Weymouth St Paul with Fleet

FEB 2026

Many thanks to all who have contributed to the Parish Magazine.
The next Magazine will be published on ***Sunday 22nd February.*** *Please send all articles, information or news you wish to be publish by Sunday 15th February.*

"Presentation of Christ in the Temple" by unknown Hungarian artist; panel painting, ca. 1510; Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (Hungary)

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

I normally leave my opening letter for the parish magazine for last. So it is the 31st today as I am writing this, the feast of St. John Bosco. This morning we had some beautiful words at Mass. The Introit was from 1 Kings 4,29: "*God gave him wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart as the sand that is on the seashore.*" Then, in the Collect, we prayed: "*Inflamed by the same fire of love, we may seek to win souls and to serve you alone.*"

Turin (Italy) in the nineteenth century was a harsh place, especially for children. Rapid industrialisation produced masses of poor, abandoned, and exploited boys — often violent because violence was all they knew. In his wisdom, Don Bosco did not only see the symptoms but their causes as well. He saw that bullied children become bullies themselves; and when treated with violence, they learned violence as a language.

Our Saint's wisdom lay in interrupting that cycle. He did not sentimentalise those boys, nor did he ignore their faults. But he chose to meet them first with kindness, patience, affection, and love — and what he gave them became what they were able to give in return. And so boys expected to become criminals became craftsmen, fathers, priests, and saints instead. Love generated love, kindness multiplied kindness. All because of one heart wide enough to receive others without first demanding they deserve it.

While the Church was still very young, pagan Romans already noticed something startling about the early Christians. They were not initially persuaded by Christian arguments, but they were struck by Christian behaviour. "See how they love," they said — and that love unconditionally included the sick and the poor, the unwanted and the forgotten, and even their enemies. Christians cared for abandoned infants, visited prisoners, buried the dead, and refused to abandon the plague-stricken. Something new was quietly taking shape, and it was visible in its fruits.

If fruit reveals the health of the tree, then the state of our own world today should give us pause. About one-third of the world's population is Christian; in Europe this number rises to 70% and while in the U.K. only about 46% of the population identifies as Christian, Christianity is still the largest religion in the country. In this context, do the fruits of our world — selfishness, consumerism, suspicion, cruelty of speech, xenophobia, judgment without mercy, communities divided along every imaginable line — not suggest that Christians have become a weakened, sick tree unable to bring about (enough) good fruits?

What do we, Christians, generate by our presence? What tends to grow around us — in our families and in the parish, in our conversations, in our workplaces and communities? What are we giving to the world?

The Church, in her wisdom, gives us Septuagesima and Lent. As one of the articles in this magazine explains, Septuagesima is a gentle, gradual but serious descent into repentance. Human beings do not change well by force. Souls need time to turn and habits need time to loosen. So we are given this liturgical season to pause and to reflect: do I have that largeness of heart praised in St. John Bosco in this morning's Introit? Am I inflamed, as he was, by a fire of love to win souls and to serve God? What are my fruits? What am I giving to the world? What am I feeding? What am I passing on?

Here, another article in the magazine offers a surprisingly apt image: the sourdough starter. Alive, fragile, easily weakened by neglect, yet capable of transforming everything it touches if it is patiently cared for. Faith works like that. Love works like that. Neglect them, and they turn sour. Tend them quietly, and they leaven the whole.

Scripture speaks of the largeness of heart. Like any muscle, the heart strengthens only through proper use. If it is never stretched, it tightens. If it is never exercised, it weakens.

Septuagesima calls us to reflection and planning, and Lent gives us a spiritual training ground. Prayer stretches the heart toward God. Fasting loosens our grip on ourselves. Almsgiving and charity extend the heart outward, beyond what is familiar or comfortable. Over time, these practices do something very practical: they enlarge our heart.

Christian charity, if it is to be real, cannot remain selective. Love that includes only those who resemble us is not Christian and is not love. The Gospel consistently presses us toward a wider circle — one that includes the inconvenient, the difficult, the overlooked.

So perhaps the prayer for this season is not primarily that we "do Lent well," but that we be given the wisdom to see how much our hearts need to be enlarged — we need it personally, our parish and communities need it, and frankly the world does too.

We now stand at what St. Paul calls the "*opportune time*". Not tomorrow. Not when circumstances improve. Now. Septuagesima and Lent are not merely liturgical seasons but God's mercy offered in time. Let us not miss this moment. May this Lent be a time when our hearts are exercised, stretched, and strengthened.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am,
ever yours in Christ,

Fr. Gregory

Pontifical Vestments: Putting on the full armour of God

At a solemn Pontifical High Mass, the bishop's vestments form a visible theology. They are not ornamental survivals from a vanished age (we are a living church and not a museum), but sacred signs through which the Church expresses the fullness of episcopal ministry. Each garment has a practical origin, a liturgical function, and a spiritual meaning, reinforced by the ancient vesting prayers which quietly shape the bishop's interior disposition as he is clothed for the altar.

The vesting begins with the *amice* (plain, square-shaped, pure linen), placed around the shoulders and neck. Its prayer asks that the "helmet of salvation" may be set upon the bishop's head, protecting him against the assaults of the enemy. This garment, once purely functional, becomes a sign of vigilance and spiritual defence. Over it comes the *alb* (white linen vestment reaching down to the ankles, often decorated with lace), whose prayer beseeches God to "cleanse me, O Lord, and purify my heart," recalling baptismal innocence and the interior purity required of one who handles holy things. The *cincture*, binding the alb, is accompanied by a prayer for chastity and self-mastery, that the "girdle of purity" may restrain the movements of fallen nature and order them to divine service.

Distinctive to the bishop are the *pontifical buskins* and *sandals*, worn only at solemn celebrations (not seen, so far, at St. Paul's, as we don't have any). As the bishop puts them on, he prays that his steps may be directed "in the way of peace," echoing the Apostle's words about feet shod with readiness for the Gospel. These vestments express not comfort or privilege, but the dignity of one sent forth to preach, govern, and sanctify.

The bishop then assumes the *tunicle* and *dalmatic*, vestments normally proper to the

subdeacon and deacon. Their prayers speak of joy, justice, and the clothing of salvation. Their presence beneath the chasuble signifies that the bishop possesses within himself the fullness of sacred ministry: he is teacher, servant, and sacrificer. Authority here is inseparable from service, and honour from responsibility.

Over these comes the *chasuble*, the principal vestment of the Mass. As it is placed upon him, the bishop prays that he may bear Christ's yoke, "which is sweet and light," and so carry out his office with charity. The chasuble gathers all lesser garments beneath it, just as charity crowns and perfects all virtues. It also signifies the sacrificial nature of the Mass, in which the bishop, as high priest of his flock, offers the Eucharistic Victim to the Father.

Among the uniquely episcopal insignia is the *pectoral cross*, worn over the breast. Its meaning is unmistakable: the bishop must carry Christ crucified in his heart, conforming his life to the mystery he celebrates. The *episcopal ring*, likewise, signifies fidelity — not merely institutional loyalty, but spousal devotion to the Church entrusted to him.

The *episcopal gloves*, worn during the early part of the Mass, are prayed over with a petition that the bishop's hands may be cleansed from all defilement, so that his actions may be pleasing to God. Their removal at the washing of hands underscores that even the most exalted office approaches the altar in humility (again, these have not been used at St. Paul's so far, as we do not have them).

Finally, the *mitre* and *pastoral staff* complete the pontifical array. The mitre's symbolism is expressed in prayers and tradition alike: it represents the Old and New Testaments illuminating the bishop's mind, and the call to teach rightly and faithfully. The pastoral staff, held as a shepherd's crook, signifies governance ordered not to domination but to care, correction, and protection.

Taken together, these vestments form a coherent whole. They instruct the faithful, discipline the minister, and elevate the liturgy beyond the ordinary. Above all, they remind bishop and people alike that sacred ministry is not self-generated, but received — a grace to be borne with reverence, humility, and fear of God.

Sourdough starter:
a living lesson in spirituality, Scripture, and tradition

A sourdough starter is, on the surface, a humble thing: flour, water, wild yeast, and time. And yet, across Christian reflection, history, and daily practice, it has become a surprisingly rich spiritual teacher. In kitchens, monasteries, and homes, the slow bubbling of a starter has long mirrored deeper truths about faith, patience, and transformation.

Unlike commercial yeast, a sourdough starter is alive. It must be fed, watched, and respected. Neglect it, and it weakens; care for it, and it grows stronger. This simple reality has inspired countless spiritual parallels. Faith, like a starter, is not manufactured. It is cultivated. It grows quietly, often invisibly, sustained by daily attention rather than dramatic moments.

Many Christian writers note that sourdough refuses speed. You cannot force it to rise on your schedule. This resistance to haste stands in contrast to modern efficiency and echoes the biblical insistence on waiting: *"Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength"* (Isaiah 40,31). Sourdough reminds us that life-bearing growth unfolds in its own time.

Bread is one of Scripture's most persistent symbols, appearing from Genesis to Revelation. Leaven, in particular, is complex. At times it represents corruption or sin; at others, quiet and holy transformation.

Christ himself uses leaven positively: *"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into three measures of flour, until it was all leavened"* (Matthew 13,33). The image is unmistakably sourdough-like: something small, hidden, and unimpressive that slowly transforms the whole. The Kingdom does not arrive with spectacle; it works from within.

Unleavened bread dominates the story of Exodus — bread of haste, eaten in affliction, made for flight. Leavened bread appears when Israel is settled, worshipping, offering thanksgiving. This contrast has shaped Christian symbolism for centuries. Sourdough belongs to stability, cultivation, and peace — to a people no longer running, but dwelling.

In Christian theology, bread ultimately points to Christ himself: *"I am the bread of life"* (John 6,35). Some theologians and preachers have noted that sourdough, unlike industrial bread, retains a memory of past loaves. Each starter carries generations within it. In this way, it becomes a quiet metaphor for apostolic continuity, tradition handed on, life received rather than invented.

Long before microbiology, bakers understood that dough could be "kept alive." In medieval Europe, monasteries were centres of bread-making knowledge. Starters were guarded carefully, sometimes passed between religious houses. Bread was not merely food but charity, medicine, and hospitality.

In many regions, starters were named, almost treated as household members. Losing one was not trivial — it could mean hunger. This explains why bread imagery became so spiritually potent: it was survival itself.

Interestingly, fermentation was often associated with mystery. The invisible work of yeast mirrored God's unseen action in the soul. Early Christian writers were fascinated by how something unseen could animate what was lifeless, swelling it with breath and warmth.

Making sourdough demands attention without anxiety. You must notice temperature, smell, texture — but you cannot dominate the process. This balance mirrors spiritual discipline: effort without control, action without coercion. Many modern spiritual writers have noted how bread-making becomes a form of embodied prayer. Hands knead what words cannot express. Waiting replaces striving. Failure teaches humility. Success fosters gratitude rather than pride, because the baker knows how little was truly "controlled."

Across Europe, bakers developed folk traditions linking bread and sanctity. Certain saints became patrons of bakers not because of miracles alone, but because bread sustained entire communities. The act of feeding others was recognised as holy work. Sourdough, in particular, attracted symbolic richness because it depended on continuity. You never truly start from nothing; you receive, preserve, and pass on. In this sense, a starter becomes a parable of tradition itself.

In an age of instant gratification and disposable goods, sourdough feels countercultural. It asks for slowness, care, and humility before natural processes. Spiritually, this resonates deeply with Christian wisdom, which has always warned against impatience and self-sufficiency.

A sourdough starter does not announce its work. It bubbles quietly in the dark. Yet, given time, it transforms ordinary flour into nourishing bread. In that sense, it may be one of the most faithful teachers of Christian spirituality available to us. Small. Hidden. Alive. Patient. And, in the end, meant to be shared.

(*If you want to make your own sourdough bread, the Vicar is happy to give you some sourdough starter!*)

Septuagesima: the (not everywhere) forgotten doorway to Lent

For most Anglicans and Catholics today, Lent seems to begin abruptly on Ash Wednesday, as if the Church suddenly slams on the brakes: *fast, repent, ashes, go*. Yet for well over a millennium, the Church knew better. She provided a threshold — a gentle but serious descent into penitence — called Septuagesima. This ancient season, once universally observed in the Western Church(es), functioned as a spiritual antechamber to Lent, preparing both soul and body for the demanding weeks ahead.

Its disappearance in the twentieth century was not only unnecessary, but deeply unfortunate. To call its abolition "silly" may sound impolite, but the reasons are compelling: Septuagesima was ancient, pedagogically brilliant, pastorally gentle, and — crucially — a shared instinct with the Christian East, which still preserves a robust pre-Lenten season to this day.

What is Septuagesima? — Septuagesima begins roughly seventy days before Easter, on what was known as Septuagesima Sunday, followed by Sexagesima and Quinquagesima. The numbers are symbolic rather than mathematically exact, echoing the biblical language of exile, trial, and purification — especially Israel's seventy years in Babylon.

Liturgically, Septuagesima marks a decisive tonal shift. The joyful *Alleluia* disappears. Violet vestments replace green. The Gloria is omitted. Scripture readings turn toward sin, exile, labour, and redemption. The Church does not yet command fasting, but she unmistakably calls the faithful to sobriety of heart. In short: Lent has not yet begun, but Easter joy is intentionally veiled.

Why Septuagesima matters spiritually — Human beings do not transition well by force. The Church, in her wisdom, understood that true repentance requires *preparation*. Septuagesima teaches us how to descend, not fall, into Lent.

Through the readings in the Mass, the Church emphasises: exile (Adam cast from Eden, humanity labouring under the weight of sin); labour (the vineyard parables, the sweat of the brow, the long road home); mortality (life as pilgrimage, not possession).

The season gently loosens our grip on distractions and pleasures before the stricter disciplines arrive. It asks us to *notice* our habits, our attachments, our resistance — without yet demanding heroic acts of fasting. In this sense, Septuagesima is profoundly merciful. It respects human weakness while still calling it by name.

Historically, the Church encouraged the faithful to begin interior Lent during Septuagesima. This included: examining one's conscience more

deliberately; simplifying meals without full fasting; reducing entertainments and excess speech; re-establishing daily prayer rhythms; preparing a concrete Lenten rule (often with the help of a spiritual director).

Importantly, Septuagesima is about orientation, not performance. It asks: Where am I heading? What needs to be stripped away? What am I avoiding?

Families often marked the season domestically: removing festive decorations, adjusting music, introducing quieter prayer. In monasteries, work intensified while speech diminished — an outward echo of the inward turn.

A season rooted in Scripture — The readings of Septuagesima repeatedly draw from Genesis and the early history of salvation: Adam's fall; Cain and Abel; the labour of humanity outside Eden. These are not random selections. They situate Lent within the cosmic story of loss and restoration, rather than reducing it to personal self-improvement.

The suppression of Alleluia is especially striking, a word simply too joyful for a people now remembering exile. Like Israel by the rivers of Babylon, the Church lays aside her harp for a time, not in despair, but in hope sharpened by longing.

Septuagesima and the Christian East — The Eastern Churches preserve a strikingly similar instinct through the *Triodion*, the liturgical book that governs the pre-Lenten and Lenten period. Weeks such as the Publican and the Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, Meatfare, and Cheesefare function exactly as Septuagesima once did: easing the faithful into ascetic discipline.

There are differences, of course. The East begins earlier, fasts more gradually, and integrates fasting rules more explicitly. Yet the underlying theology is the same: repentance is learned, not imposed; discipline grows organically; joy is restrained so it may return purified.

That both East and West independently developed pre-Lenten seasons should tell us something profound about human nature and spiritual pedagogy. The abolition of Septuagesima was an unfortunate departure from ancient wisdom.

Using Septuagesima today — Even though it is no longer universally present in the Western Churches (though it is observed here at St. Paul's), Septuagesima can still be lived. Beyond our liturgical practices, at home we might: begin reading Genesis or penitential psalms; reduce media and noise; and perhaps most importantly plan Lent deliberately rather than reactively.

Repentance is not a switch, but a journey. Souls need time to turn, habits need time to loosen, and hearts need space to awaken to sorrow and to hope.

Candlemas: Light, Revelation, and Glory

(from various sources)

Each year, forty days after the joy of Christmas, the Church brings Christmastide to its solemn and luminous close with the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, more commonly known as ***Candlemas***. Celebrated on 2 February, with its almost austere blessing of candles in penitential violet and its solemn procession, its profound prayers have come down to us from the earliest centuries of Christian worship.

In this article, let us first look at the liturgical rite itself: its antiquity, theology, and symbolism. Secondly, we shall turn to the medieval customs, folklore, and popular devotions associated with Candlemas in England and across Europe. Finally, a brief glance will be given to how the same mystery is celebrated in the Eastern Christian rites.

I. The ancient liturgy of Candlemas

Biblical and historical roots — Candlemas is rooted directly in the Gospel of St. Luke (2,22–40). Obedient to the Law of Moses, the Virgin Mary comes to the Temple forty days after the birth of her Son for her ritual purification, and there she presents the Child Jesus to God. It is in this moment that the aged Simeon, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, takes the Child in his arms and proclaims Him to be *"a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."* These words form the heart of the feast and explain why light — and specifically blessed light — stands at its centre.

The celebration of this mystery is among the most ancient feasts of the Christian calendar. By the fourth century it was already observed in Jerusalem, where a solemn procession marked the day. From the East it spread rapidly to the West. In Rome, by the seventh century, the feast had taken on its characteristic penitential and processional character, possibly as a Christian transformation of earlier pagan rites connected with purification and seasonal renewal. Whatever the surrounding cultural context, the Church unmistakably shaped Candlemas as a deeply Christological feast: the true Light entering His Temple.

The ancient Roman Rite as preserved in the English Missal — In the traditional Roman Rite Candlemas is unique in structure. Before the Mass itself begins, there is an elaborate *Blessing of Candles*, followed by a *Procession*, and only then the *Mass* of the feast. The colour for the blessing and procession is violet, strikingly penitential for a feast that still belongs to the

joyful cycle of Christmas. This is not accidental. The rite foreshadows the sorrow that Simeon foretells to Mary: *"Thy own soul a sword shall pierce."* Only after the procession does the colour change to white for the Mass, as joy and glory come fully into view.

The Blessing of Candles — The traditional blessing of candles is one of the richest sacramentals in the Church's treasury. The prayers are lengthy, densely theological, and unmistakably ancient in tone. They do not merely ask that the candles be blessed; they unfold the entire meaning of Christ as Light, and of the faithful who are called to walk in that Light.

The candles are repeatedly associated with purity of soul, with the fire of divine charity, and with protection against the darkness of sin and error. One prayer asks that all who carry these candles may be inflamed with heavenly desire and arrive at the splendour of eternal light. Another explicitly links the material candle — wax, wick, and flame — to Christ Himself: born of the Virgin (pure wax), animated by His soul (the wick), and shining with the glory of His divinity (the flame).

These prayers are unmistakably "non-modern". They assume a worldview in which material things can truly mediate spiritual realities. Light does not merely *symbolise* Christ; it participates, by blessing, in His mission to enlighten the world.

The Procession: meeting the Lord — Following the blessing, the faithful form a procession, carrying the newly blessed candles: a liturgical action of great theological weight. The procession represents the Church going forth to meet Christ, just as Simeon and Anna went forth to meet the Messiah in the Temple.

In earlier centuries, this procession often took place outside, encircling the church or moving through the streets. Even when confined indoors, its meaning remains: the Christian life is a pilgrimage, a movement from darkness into light, from promise into fulfilment. The antiphons sung during the procession — especially "*a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel*" — place the words of Simeon directly on the lips of the Church.

The use of violet here deepens the meaning. We carry light, but we do so in a world still marked by sin, suffering, and expectation. Candlemas thus stands as a hinge between the joy of Christmas and the austerity of Lent, already pointing us toward the Cross.

The Mass of Candlemas — Once the procession concludes, the Mass begins in white (or gold, or blue), and the tone subtly shifts. The Introit once again proclaims the coming of the Lord into His holy Temple. The words of Nunc Dimittis, Simeon's canticle — *"Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"*

— become lived reality when the faithful in the Eucharist truly behold and receive that salvation, though hidden under sacramental signs.

II. Candlemas in Medieval England and Europe

The turning of the year — In the medieval imagination, Candlemas marked a decisive moment in the natural and agricultural year. Christmas greenery was traditionally taken down on Candlemas Eve; to leave it longer was considered unlucky. The feast thus closed the festive season and signalled a return to ordinary labour, but with hope renewed.

Weather — Weather lore attached itself strongly to the day. In England and across northern Europe, Candlemas was believed to foretell the remainder of winter. A bright, sunny Candlemas meant more cold to come; a dark and stormy one promised an early spring. These sayings survive in various forms, including those that later gave rise to Groundhog Day traditions in the New World.

Candles as protection and blessing — Candles blessed at Candlemas were treasured sacramentals in medieval households. They were kept throughout the year and lit during storms, at times of illness, and at the hour of death. To die with a blessed candle in hand was considered a great consolation, a final participation in the light of Christ.

In England, parishioners often brought their own candles to be blessed, sometimes paying a small due to the church for the wax. Guilds and confraternities took particular pride in providing large candles for the parish celebration, which would then burn before the altar on major feasts.

England, France, and the pancake tradition — On the Continent, Candlemas acquired a more overtly festive domestic character. In France, *La Chandeleur* became associated with pancakes, whose round, golden shape evoked the sun and the returning light. Similar customs existed in parts of Belgium and Italy.

In England, while pancakes became more closely associated with Shrovetide, Candlemas still carried echoes of feasting and hospitality, especially as it marked the final use of rich foods stored since Christmas.

Candlemas and the Virgin Mary — Although firmly Christological, Candlemas also held a strong Marian dimension in the Middle Ages. As the Feast of the Purification, it highlighted Mary's humility and obedience. In popular devotion, she was invoked on this day as a protector of mothers and families, and her sorrows, foreshadowed by Simeon's prophecy, were gently contemplated.

III. Candlemas beyond the Western Church

The mystery celebrated at Candlemas is universal, and it is striking how widely shared its core elements are across Christian traditions.

In the Byzantine rites, the feast is known as the *Meeting of the Lord* (*Hypapante*). The emphasis falls even more strongly on the encounter between Christ and His people. Processions with candles are also central, and the theology of light is richly developed in hymns, though without the penitential violet characteristic of the Roman use.

The Russian tradition shares this Byzantine heritage but often places particular stress on Christ as the Judge and Light of the nations, themes that resonate deeply with Slavic spirituality.

In the Coptic rite, the Presentation is celebrated with joyful solemnity, integrated into a broader festal cycle that highlights Christ's manifestation to Israel.

The Mozarabic rite that greatly influenced Thomas Cranmer, a medieval rite preserved in Spain, also commemorates the Presentation with distinctive prayers and chants that emphasise fulfilment and revelation.

Across East and West, then, the same essential truth shines forth: Christ, the Light of the world, comes to His Temple, and His people go out to meet Him.

Bearing the Light today — To celebrate Candlemas according to these ancient rites is not an exercise in nostalgia. It is a profoundly countercultural act. In a world often uncomfortable with darkness, waiting, and sacrifice, Candlemas teaches us to hold light patiently, reverently, and with hope. The penitential colour of the procession reminds us: that same light must be kept, guarded, and renewed, first of all in us Christians. How often we obscure Christ's light in our own lives, and in the life of the Church, through our sins.

As we carry our blessed candles in procession, we are reminded that the Light we bear is not our own. It is Christ Himself, given to us so that we may walk in His truth and, in our turn, illumine the world — until that day when, like Simeon, we may say with peace and joy: *"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."*

O Christ, true Light born of the Virgin, who today art borne into Thy holy Temple: kindle in us the fire of Thy charity. As we bear these lights with faithful hands, so may our souls shine with purity, until, freed from darkness, we come to the unsetting Light of Thy glory. Amen.

Interesting cultural facts from around the world

Jeanne James writes:

Japan – Slurping noodles is considered polite and shows appreciation for the meal.

Finland – There are more saunas than cars; many business meetings happen in saunas.

India – The right hand is traditionally used for eating; the left is considered unclean.

Italy – Cappuccino is typically only drunk in the morning, never after meals.

South Korea – Age is very important; people may ask your age early to know how to address you properly.

Germany – Jaywalking is socially frowned upon, especially in front of children.

New Zealand (Māori culture) – The haka is a ceremonial dance used for celebration, welcome, or challenge.

Thailand – Touching someone's head is disrespectful; the head is considered the most sacred part of the body.

Spain – Lunch can last several hours, and dinner is often eaten as late as 10pm.

China – Giving a clock as a gift is avoided because it symbolizes death.

Brazil – Personal space is smaller; standing close during conversations is normal.

Scotland – Men can wear kilts at formal events like weddings.

Mexico – Día de Los Muertos celebrates the dead with joy, food, and colourful altars rather than mourning.

United Arab Emirates – Showing the soles of your feet can be considered rude.

France – Bread is placed directly on the table, not on the plate.

Greece – Nodding can mean "no," which often confuses visitors.

Indonesia – Pointing with the thumb is more polite than pointing with the index finger.

Sweden – "Fika" is a daily coffee break that emphasizes socializing and slowing down.

Nigeria – Greeting elders properly is a sign of respect; some cultures bow or kneel.

Peru – Traditional clothing often reflects the specific village a person comes from.

Calendar, Service Times, and Prayer Intentions

Anniversaries of death

Order of Morning and Evening Prayer

Calendar for February 2026

SUN	1st	**SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY**	10.30am, 4pm
MON	2nd	**Purification of Our Lady** (Candlemas)	9am
TUE	3rd	*St. Blaise Bishop (Blessing of the throat)*	9am
WED	4th	St. Andrew Corsini Bishop	10am
THU	5th	St. Agatha, Virgin & Martyr	6pm
FRI	6th	St. Titus Bishop	12pm
SAT	7th	St. Romuald Abbot	9.30am, 10am
SUN	8th	**SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY**	10.30am, 4pm
MON	9th	St. Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop & Doctor	9am
TUE	10th	St. Scholastica	9am
WED	11th	Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes	10am
THU	12th	The Seven Holy Founders of the Servites	6pm
FRI	13th	*Feria — **Monthly Requiem***	12pm
SAT	14th	*Of the Blessed Virgin Mary*	9.30am, 10am
SUN	15th	**QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY**	10.30am, 4pm
MON	16th	*Feria*	9am
TUE	17th	*Feria*	9am
WED	18th	**ASH WEDNESDAY**	10am, 6pm
THU	19th	*Feria*	6pm
FRI	20th	*Feria*	12pm, *5pm**
SAT	21st	*Feria*	9.30am, 10am
SUN	22nd	**1ST SUNDAY OF LENT**	10.30am, 4pm
MON	23rd	*Feria*	9am
TUE	24th	**St. Matthias Apostle**	9am
WED	25th	Ember Day	10am
THU	26th	*Feria*	6pm
FRI	27th	Ember Day ***(Anointing)***	12pm, *5pm**
SAT	28th	Ember Day	9.30am, 10am

5pm (Fridays in Lent) - Stations of the Cross*
10am (Saturdays) - Holy Rosary

Daily Intentions & *Anniversaries of death*

We pray for…

1st Our Parish - *Jack Freegard*
2nd Our Parish - *May Biles, Neil Pollock pr, Edward Webber, Vera Heller*
3rd The purity and charity of our words - *Dot Thorne*
4th Our Servers
5th Priests and vocations - *Amelia Woods*
6th Dying - *Doll Rowland*
7th Shrine of Walsingham

8th Our Parish - *Mike Hetherington*
9th S.P.O.T. (volunteers, clients) - *Leonard Paddock, Pam Groves, Maureen Riggs*
10th Families
11th Addicts, alcoholics, gamblers - *Hilda Dix*
12th Greater devotion to Our Lady - *Elizabeth Woolveridge*
13th Departed - *Den Phillips*
14th Cell of O.L. of Walsingham - *Thomas Bibby, Win Marshall, Charlie Cooper*

15th Our Parish
16th Peace - *Joan Hodge, Bob de Quehen, Caroline Stewart*
17th Our PCC - *Ivy Curtis, Steve Warner*
18th A holy and fruitful Lent
19th Our Benefactors (living and departed)
20th Our Organists & Choir - *Leslie Quehen pr*
21st An increase in our missionary spirit

22nd Our Parish - *Stephen Elliott, William Gentle, Gordon Vincent pr*
23rd Our Diocese - *Sandra Ryder*
24th Bishop of Oswestry - *Mary Adlam*
25th Grieving parents
26th Grace of true conversion - *Francis Miles*
27th Sick - *Bill Frecker, Jack Williams*
28th All who suffer in body, mind or spirit - *Toni Adams*

If there are names missing from the list or you want to add names, please, talk to the Vicar.

Open, O Lord, my mouth to bless thy holy Name; cleanse also my heart from all vain, evil, and wandering thoughts; enlighten my understanding and kindle my affections; that I may worthily, attentively, and devoutly recite this Morning Prayer, and so be meet to be heard before the presence of thy divine Majesty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MORNING PRAYER

V. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.
R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

> V. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
> R. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord. R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

> V. Hail Mary… R. Holy Mary…

V. And the Word was made flesh. R. And dwelt amongst us.

> V. Hail Mary… R. Holy Mary…

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O Lord, open my lips. R. And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
V. O God, make speed to save me. R. O Lord, make haste to help me.
V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

V. Let us rejoice in the Lord; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him!
R. The Lord has promised a crown to those who love him.
V. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hands are the depths of the earth; and the heights of the mountains are his.
R. The Lord has promised a crown to those who love him.
V. The sea is his, for who but he made it; and his hands fashioned the dry land. O come, let us worship and fall down, and weep before the Lord who

made us! For he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
R. The Lord has promised a crown to those who love him.
V. Today if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts: As in the provocation, on the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted me, and put me to the test, and they saw my works.
R. The Lord has promised a crown to those who love him.
V. For forty years I loathed that generation, and I said: They always err in heart, they have not known my ways, so I swore in my wrath: they shall not enter my rest.
R. The Lord has promised a crown to those who love him.
V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
R. The Lord has promised a crown to those who love him.

HYMN

Before Lent:

Hail day! whereon the One in Three
First formed the earth by sure decree,
The day its Maker rose again,
And vanquished death, and burst our chain.

O Father of unclouded light!
Keep us this day as in thy sight,
In word and deed that we may be
From ev'ry touch of evil free.

That this our body's mortal frame
May know no sin, and fear no shame,
Nor fire hereafter be the end
Of passions which our bosom rend.

Redeemer of the world, we pray
That thou wouldst wash our sins away,
And give us, of thy boundless grace,
The blessings of the heavenly place.

Most Holy Father, hear our cry,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord most High
Who, with the Holy Ghost and thee
Shall live and reign eternally. Amen.

From Ash Wednesday:

The fast, as taught by holy lore,
We keep in solemn course once more:
The fast to all men known, and bound
In forty days of yearly round.

More sparing therefore let us make
The words we speak, the food we take,
Our sleep and mirth, and closer barred
Be every sense in holy guard.

Avoid the evil thoughts that roll
Like waters o'er the heedless soul;
Nor let the foe occasion find
Our souls in slavery to bind.

Forgive the sin that we have wrought;
Increase the good that we have sought:
That we at length, our wanderings o'er,
May please thee here and evermore.

Grant O thou Blessed Trinity,
Grant, O Essential Unity,
That this our fast of forty days
May work our profit and thy praise.

The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

1	**71**	**Haggai 2,1-9 1 Corinthians 3,10–17**	**15**	**72**	**Exodus 34,29-end 2 Corinthians 4,3-6**
2	48, 146	Exodus 13,1-16 Romans 12,1-5	16	76	Genesis 37,1-11 Galatians 1
3	50	Genesis 18,16-end Matthew 27,27-44	17	78 v. 1-39	Genesis 37,12-end Galatians 2,1-10
4	51	Genesis 19 Matthew 27,45-56	18	38	Daniel 9,3-19 1 Timothy 6,6-19
5	54	Genesis 21 Matthew 27,57-end	19	77	Genesis 39 Galatians 2,11-end
6	55	Genesis 22 Matthew 28,1-15	20	3, 7	Genesis 40 Galatians 3,1-14
7	56	Genesis 23 Matthew 28,16-end	21	71	Genesis 41,1-24 Galatians 3,15-end
8	**100, 150**	**Job 38,1-21 Colossians 1,15-20**	**22**	**119**	**Jeremiah 18,1-11 Luke 18,9-14**
9	57	Genesis 30 2 Timothy 4,1-8	23	10, 11	Genesis 41,25-45 Galatians 4,1-7
10	63	Genesis 31,1-24 2 Timothy 4,9-end	24	44	Genesis 41,46-end Galatians 4,8-20
11	68	Genesis 31,25-end Titus 1	25	6, 17	Genesis 42,1-17 Galatians 4,21-end
12	70	Genesis 32 Titus 2	26	87	Genesis 42,18-28 Galatians 5,1-15
13	73	Genesis 33,1-17 Titus 3	27	42, 43	Genesis 42,29-end Galatians 5,16-end
14	75	Genesis 35 Philemon	28	22	Genesis 43,1-15 Galatians 6

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS

Before Lent: The Lord said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before Me, make an ark that seed of all flesh may be saved therein.

From Ash Wednesday: Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil and when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, *
who has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, *
born of the house of his servant David.
Through his holy prophets God promised of old *
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
To show mercy to our ancestors, *
and to remember his holy covenant.
This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: *
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear, *
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation *
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God *
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, *
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, *
world without end. Amen.

Before Lent: The Lord said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before Me, make an ark that seed of all flesh may be saved therein.

From Ash Wednesday: Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil and when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.

V. Let us pray. – ***Intercessions*** *are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (the world), for those in need, and for the dead. Then follows one of the Collects:*

Before Lent: O Lord, we beseech you favourably to hear the prayers of your people; that we, who are justly afflicted for our sins, may be mercifully delivered by your goodness, for the glory of your Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

From Ash Wednesday: Grant, O Lord, that your faithful people may, with true piety, undertake the time-honoured custom of fasting and may carry it out with unwavering devotion. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

V. The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life.
R. Amen.
V. Let us bless the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God.
V. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
R. Amen. — *Morning Prayer ends with the final Antiphon of Our Lady:*

Hail, O Queen of heaven, enthroned! Hail, by Angels Mistress owned!
Root of Jesse, Gate of morn, Whence the world's true Light was born:
Glorious Virgin, joy to thee, Loveliest whom in heaven they see:
Fairest thou, where all are fair, Plead with Christ our sins to spare
V. Allow me to praise thee, O holy Virgin.
R. Give me strength against thine enemies.
V. Let us pray. Grant, O merciful God, to our weak natures thy protection, that we who commemorate the holy Mother of God may, by the help of her intercession, arise from our iniquities. Through the same Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

V. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.
R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

V. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
R. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord. R. Be it unto me according to thy word.
V. Hail Mary… R. Holy Mary…

V. And the Word was made flesh. R. And dwelt amongst us.
V. Hail Mary… R. Holy Mary…

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O God, make speed to save me. R. O Lord, make haste to help me.
V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

HYMN

Before Lent:

O blest Creator of the light,
Who mak'st the day with radiance bright,
And o'er the forming world didst call
The light from chaos first of all;

Whose wisdom joined in meet array
The morn and eve, and named them day:
Night comes with all its darkling fears;
Regard thy people's prayers and tears.

Lest, sunk in sin, and whelmed with strife,
They lose the gift of endless life;
While thinking but the thoughts of time,
They weave new chains of woe and crime.

But grant them grace that they may strain
The heavenly gate and prize to gain:
Each harmful lure aside to cast,
And purge away each error past.

O Father, that we ask be done,
Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son;
Who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,
Doth live and reign eternally. Amen.

From Ash Wednesday:

O kind Creator, bow thine ear
To mark the cry, to know the tear
Before thy throne of mercy spent
In this thy holy fast of Lent.

Our hearts are open, Lord, to thee:
Thou knowest our infirmity;
Pour out on all who seek thy face
Abundance of thy pardoning grace.

Our sins are many, this we know;
Spare us, good Lord, thy mercy show;
And for the honour of thy name
Our fainting souls to life reclaim.

Give us the self-control that springs
From discipline of outward things,
That fasting inward secretly
The soul may purely dwell with thee.

We pray thee, blessed Trinity,
One God, unchanging Unity,
That we from this our abstinence
May reap the fruits of penitence. Amen.

The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

1	**Psalm 118**	**1 Samuel 1,19-end Hebrews 4,11-end**	10	67	2 Chronicles 10 John 19,17-30
2	122, 132	Haggai 2,1-9 John 2,18-22	11	69	2 Chronicles 12 John 19,31-end
3	60	Hosea 10 1 Corinthians 13	12	80	2 Chronicles 13 John 20,1-10
4	61	Hosea 11 1 Corinthians 14,1-19	13	81	2 Chronicles 14 John 20,11-18
5	62	Hosea 12 1 Corinthians 14,20-end	14	82	2 Chronicles 15,1-15 John 20,19-end
6	64	Hosea 13 1 Corinthians 16,1-9	**15**	**84**	**Ecclesiasticus 48,1-10 Matthew 17,9-23**
7	65	Hosea 14 1 Corinthians 16,10-end	16	86	Jeremiah 1 John 3,1-21
8	**148**	**Leviticus 24,1-9 1 Timothy 4**	17	91	Jeremiah 2,1-13 John 3,22-end
9	66	2 Chronicles 9,1-12 John 19,1-16	18	51	Isaiah 1,10-18 Luke 15,11-end

19	74	Jeremiah 2,14-32 John 4,1-26	24	46, 49	Jeremiah 5,1-19 John 5,19-29
20	31	Jeremiah 3,6-22 John 4,27-42	25	9, 28	Jeremiah 5,20-end John 5,30-end
21	73	Jeremiah 4,1-18 John 4,43-end	26	137, 138	Jeremiah 6,9-21 John 6,1-15
22	**50 v. 1-15**	**Deuteronomy 6,4-end Luke 15,1-10**	27	54, 55	Jeremiah 6,22-end John 6,16-27
23	12, 13, 14	Jeremiah 4,19-end John 5,1-18	28	4, 16	Jeremiah 7,1-20 John 6,27-40

Each reading ends with these words:
V. This is the word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

MAGNIFICAT

Before Lent: Be valiant in battle, fight the ancient serpent, accept the eternal kingdom.

From Ash Wednesday: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation; let us approve ourselves in fastings, in prayer, and in love unfeigned.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, +
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;*
he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed; +
the Almighty has done great things for me*
and holy is his name.
He has mercy on those who fear him,*
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm*
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones*
and lifting up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things*
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,*
to remember his promise of mercy,

The promise made to our ancestors,*
to Abraham and his children for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, *
world without end. Amen.

Before Lent: Be valiant in battle, fight the ancient serpent, accept the eternal kingdom.

From Ash Wednesday: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation; let us approve ourselves in fastings, in prayer, and in love unfeigned.

V. Let us pray. – ***Intercessions*** *are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (the world), for those in need, and for the dead. Then follows one of the Collects:*

Before Lent: O Lord, we beseech you favourably to hear the prayers of your people; that we, who are justly afflicted for our sins, may be mercifully delivered by your goodness, for the glory of your Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

From Ash Wednesday: Grant, O Lord, that your faithful people may, with true piety, undertake the time-honoured custom of fasting and may carry it out with unwavering devotion. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

V. Let us bless the Lord. R. Thanks be to God. V. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. R. Amen.

Optional private prayer to be said after Evening Prayer: To the Most Holy and undivided Trinity, to our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified, to the fruitful Virginity of the most blessed and most glorious Mary, always a Virgin, and to the holiness of all the Saints be ascribed everlasting praise, honour, and glory, by all creatures, and to us be granted the forgiveness of all our sins, world without end. Amen.

Lenten Prayers

O gracious Master, infuse in our hearts the spotless light of Your Divine Wisdom and open the eyes of our mind that we may understand the teachings of Your Gospel. Instil in us also the fear of Your blessed commandments, so that having curbed all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing everything to please You. For You, O Christ, our God, are the enlightenment of our souls and bodies; and to You we render glory. Amen.

My precious and crucified Lord, I offer You this Lent. I offer it to You with total abandonment and trust. I offer You my prayers, sacrifices and my very life this day. Do with me, Lord, as You will. I pray that this Lent will be fruitful. I know You have much to say to me and much to do in my life. May this Lent be a time through which Your mercy is poured in abundance into my soul. Dearest Lord, give me courage and strength to confess my sins, and to turn from them with all my heart. Keep me faithful to my Lenten promises, and bring forth new life through these sacrifices of love. Amen.

Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus while before Your face I humbly kneel and, with burning soul, pray and beseech You to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope, and charity; true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment. While I contemplate, with great love and tender pity, Your five most precious wounds, pondering over them within me and calling to mind the words which David, Your prophet, said to You, my Jesus: "*They have pierced My hands and My feet, they have numbered all My bones*." Amen.

While fasting with the body, let us also fast in spirit. Let us lose every bond of iniquity; let us undo the knots of every contact made by violence; let us tear up all unjust agreements; let us give bread to the hungry and welcome to our house the poor who have no roof to cover them, that we may receive mercy from Christ our God. (*Byzantine Vespers*)

Look with favour, Lord, on your household. Grant that, though our flesh be humbled by abstinence from food, our souls, hungering after you, may be resplendent in your sight. (*St. Pius V Pope*)

Come, my Light, and illumine my darkness. Come, my Life, and revive me from death. Come, my Physician, and heal my wounds. Come, Flame of divine love, and burn up the thorns of my sins, kindling my heart with the flame of thy love. (*St. Demetrius of Rostov*)

God, may Your light guide my day, and your Spirit bring me peace. Amen.

Saint of the month: St. Cyril of Alexandria
Bishop, Confessor & Doctor of the Church

9 February

Born around 376–380 AD in Egypt, likely into a prominent Christian family, Cyril received a classical education steeped in Scripture, rhetoric, and theology. He was the nephew of Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, who brought him to the centre of ecclesiastical life and likely facilitated his early monastic training and theological formation.

In 412 AD, after Theophilus's death, Cyril succeeded him as Patriarch of Alexandria, one of the most powerful sees in the Christian world. His election was not peaceful — he assumed the post amid factional strife and rioting between his supporters and those of a rival candidate.

From the outset, Cyril governed with vigorous zeal. He moved swiftly against groups he judged schismatic or heretical and was not shy about exercising ecclesiastical authority to enforce doctrinal conformity. Early in his patriarchate, he also expelled the Jewish community from Alexandria after violent clashes between Christians and Jews, an action that deepened tensions between religious communities.

Cyril's principal historical impact was theological. In 428 AD, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, began teaching that Mary should not be called *Theotokos* ("God-bearer"), preferring *Christotokos* ("Christ-bearer"). Cyril saw this as dangerous because it risked undermining the reality of the Incarnation — that one divine Person assumed full humanity.

Cyril responded with letters and theological arguments that were robust and uncompromising, culminating in a call for an ecumenical council. The result was the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, over which Cyril presided as the representative of Pope Celestine. The council condemned Nestorius's teachings and affirmed Mary as *Theotokos*, a decision that became a cornerstone of orthodox Christology.

Yet even this victory was fraught. Because Cyril opened the council before supporters of Nestorius had arrived, bishops allied with Nestorius

held a "rival council" and attempted to depose Cyril. The emperor briefly annulled Cyril's authority and imprisoned him, but after political and ecclesiastical pressure, Cyril was restored and Nestorius was exiled.

Cyril's leadership was not only doctrinal but deeply political, and on occasion his methods were blunt. The ancient historian Socrates Scholasticus recounts a turbulent power struggle in Alexandria between Cyril and the imperial governor Orestes, which was intertwined with social and religious rivalries. In this context, the renowned philosopher Hypatia was killed in 415 AD by a Christian mob.

Historians debate Cyril's role in this tragedy. Contemporary sources do not conclusively prove he ordered her murder, and some accounts suggest he was not present when it occurred. However, his supporters — particularly the parabalani (a group of monastic men attached to the bishop) — were implicated in escalating tensions that helped create the volatile environment in which Hypatia died. Regardless of direct responsibility, the incident brought "great disgrace" on the Church of Alexandria and on Cyril's episcopacy in the eyes of many of his contemporaries.

Despite these controversies, Cyril's theological contributions became foundational. His insistence on the hypostatic union — that Christ is one Person with both full divinity and full humanity — shaped the trajectory of Christian theology. This contribution was so significant that centuries later he was honoured as a Doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIII in 1883.

Cyril's life illustrates the complexity of holiness in a real world of power, conflict, and human fallibility. He was a man of profound intellect and fierce conviction, whose achievements in defending orthodoxy were sometimes accompanied by impulsive actions and harsh measures. Even within his own era, critics noted that greater patience and diplomacy might have eased some disputes.

The Church venerates him not because he was perfect, but because — through all his struggles — he remained committed to what he believed was the truth of the Gospel. Lives of the saints are valuable not only for the virtue they reveal but also for the less admirable qualities that also appear. Holiness is a gift of God to us as human beings. Life is a process. We respond to God's gift, but sometimes with a lot of zigzagging and even saints must grow out of immaturity, narrowness, and selfishness.

*The **icon on the opposite page** presents Saint Cyril of Alexandria as a pillar of the faith, standing firm in unyielding stillness. In his hand he holds a dark iron rod, evoking his Christological image of iron united with fire: distinct yet inseparable, as the two natures of Christ. Upon his chest appears the Theotokos with the Child, proclaiming the Incarnation he defended—one divine Person, born of Mary, unconfused and undivided.*

Know the Bible! - The Book of Esther (1)

(© bibleproject)

This is one of the more exciting and curious books in the Bible. The story is set over 100 years after the Babylonian exile of the Israelites from their land. While some Jews did return to Jerusalem (see *Ezra-Nehemiah*), many did not. The book of Esther is about a Jewish community living in Susa, the capital city of the ancient Persian Empire. The main characters are two Jews, Mordecai and his niece Esther. Then there is the king of Persia and the Persian official Haman, the cunning villain.

Esther is a curious book in the Bible because God is never mentioned, not once. This may strike you as odd because the Bible is supposed to be a book about God. However, this is a brilliant technique by the anonymous author. It is an invitation to read the story looking for God's activity, and there are signs of it everywhere. The story is full of odd coincidences and ironic reversals that force you to see God's purpose at work behind every scene.

The Big Idea — The book of Esther asks us to trust in God's providence even when we cannot see it working. That requires a posture of hope to trust God's commitment to redeem his good world and overcome evil.

Esther 1-2: Esther Becomes Queen — The story begins when the king of Persia throws two elaborate banquet feasts that last a total of 187 days, all for the grandiose purpose of displaying his greatness and splendour. On the last day of the feast, the king is drunk and demands that his wife, Queen Vashti, appear at the party to show off her beauty. She refuses, and, in a drunken rage, the king deposes Vashti and makes a silly decree that all Persian men should be the masters of their own homes.

Then the king holds a beauty pageant to find a new queen. And right when the story feels like a bad soap opera, we are introduced to Esther and Mordecai. Esther hides her Jewish identity and poses as a Persian, and she wins the pageant. The king is so obsessed with Esther that he elevates her as the new queen of Persia. After this, Mordecai "just happens" to overhear two royal guards plotting to murder the king. He informs Esther, who then tells the king, and Mordecai gets credit for saving the king's life. And in all these

remarkable events, God is not mentioned, but it all seems so providentially ordered. What is God up to?

Esther 3-6: Haman's Plot and Mordecai's Rise to Power — We begin to find out in the next part of the story. We are introduced to Haman, who is not a Persian but an Agagite, a descendant of the ancient Amalekites. The king elevates Haman to the highest position in the kingdom and demands that all kneel before him. But when Mordecai sees Haman, he refuses to kneel. Haman is filled with rage. When Haman finds out that Mordecai is Jewish, he successfully persuades the king to enact a decree to destroy all the Jews. They decide the date of this horrific day in an outrageous way. Haman rolls ancient dice (*Pur* in Hebrew), and the decree is set. Eleven months later, on the 13th of Adar, all the Jews will be executed. Haman and the king throw a party to celebrate the decree.

After this, the story focuses on Mordecai and Esther, who are now the only hope for the Jewish people. They plan for Esther to reveal her Jewish identity to the king and ask that he reverse the decree (ch. 4). But there is risk involved because approaching the king without a royal request was an act punishable by death, according to Persian law. At a crucial moment in the story, Mordecai asserts that if Esther remains silent, "*deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place.*" Then he wonders aloud, "*Who knows, maybe you have become queen for this very moment!*" Esther responds with bravery, "*If I perish, I perish,*" and she decides to approach the king.

We then see an ironic reversal of all of Haman's evil plans. Esther hosts the king and Haman at a banquet, where she makes a special request that they both come to an even more exclusive banquet the next day. Haman leaves the feast quite drunk and happy with himself, and he sees Mordecai in the street. When Mordecai does not bow, Haman fumes with anger and orders that a tall stake be built, so that Mordecai can be impaled upon it in the morning.

It seems things cannot get any worse for the Jews or for Mordecai. But all of a sudden, the story pivots in chapter 6. That night, the king cannot sleep, so he has the royal chronicles read to him. He just happens to hear about how Mordecai saved the king's life from the plot of the guards. The king had totally forgotten about it! So in the morning, as Haman enters to request Mordecai's execution, the king orders Haman to honour Mordecai publicly for saving his life. Haman then has to lead Mordecai around the city on a royal horse. This reversal forms a turning point in the story, beginning with Haman's downfall and ending with Mordecai's rise to power.

The story continues in next's month magazine… *(Illustration: Edwin Long, Queen Esther, 1878; oil on canvas; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia)*

The Psalms

Psalms 57: Fear and praise

Psalm 57 brings together two human experiences that often seem opposed: fear and praise. It begins with a cry for help and ends with joyful thanksgiving. Yet these are not two separate prayers stitched together. They belong to one movement of faith. The psalm shows how a person can turn to God in danger and still find words of praise before the danger has fully passed.

At the heart of the psalm stands a refrain: God's glory is above the heavens and over all the earth. This refrain reminds us that the psalm is not only about personal trouble. It is about who God is. Both the cry for help and the song of praise are directed toward the same God, whose power and faithfulness reach far beyond the immediate situation.

The psalm does not tell us exactly what the worshipper is facing. Instead, it uses familiar images: enemies like lions, hunters setting nets, people digging pits. These pictures are not meant to describe one specific event. They describe what it feels like to be threatened, trapped, or surrounded. One detail stands out: the greatest danger does not come from physical weapons, but from words—slander, deceit, and destructive speech. Even today, we know how deeply words can wound.

In response, the worshipper does not lash out. Instead, he seeks refuge in God. He prays to be hidden "*in the shadow of God's wings,*" a phrase that suggests safety, closeness, and care. This image comes from the worship of the Temple, where people believed God was truly present among them. To seek refuge there is to trust that God is near and attentive, especially in times of fear.

The prayer quickly moves from asking to trusting. God's steadfast love and faithfulness are invoked not as abstract qualities but as active forces sent from heaven, almost as divine messengers bringing help. These are not distant ideas but living realities. Because God has been faithful in the past, the worshipper believes God will act again. Even before the situation has fully changed, confidence begins to grow. And so, the thanksgiving section marks not so much a change in time as a change in inner orientation. The worshipper's heart is now described as firm and steadfast, filled with the thought of God.

This inner change becomes clear in the second half of the psalm where fear no longer has the final word. The worshipper speaks of waking the dawn with music and song, suggesting joy that spills over into a new day. Praise here is not quiet or hidden. It is something shared, sung aloud, and

celebrated together. Indeed, the language points beyond private devotion to public worship, accompanied by temple instruments and enacted before a gathered assembly.

The psalm's horizon then widens further. Praise is offered among the peoples and the nations, indicating that God's steadfast love cannot be confined to a single individual or community. Personal deliverance becomes a sign and pledge of God's saving purpose for the world. The worshipper's joy is neither self-centred nor triumphalistic but integrated into a larger vision of divine salvation.

One verse, verse 6, brings the whole psalm together. It recalls both the danger created by the enemies and the judgment that has already begun to overturn it. The worshipper remembers the traps set by the evil and sees that they have fallen into them themselves—not through human revenge but the moral order upheld by God. Evil naturally invokes on itself its own punishment. Because of this, lament turns into thanksgiving. Sustained by the eternal presence of God, the psalm holds together fear and confidence, restraint and praise, in a unified testimony to God's enduring faithfulness.

Psalm 57 reminds us that prayer does not require perfect calm or complete answers. We can come to God while still afraid. We can begin with a plea and end with praise, even when life is not yet resolved. The psalm invites us to trust that God's presence is greater than our danger and that his faithfulness will carry us from fear into hope.

Reflective Questions

1. When you read Psalm 57, where do you recognise moments of fear or uncertainty in your own life?
2. What does it mean for you to seek refuge in God when problems are not yet resolved?
3. How have words—either kind or harmful—shaped your experiences of trust and hurt?
4. In what ways might your personal story of faith become a quiet witness to others?

Loving God,
when I feel afraid or surrounded by worry,
help me to trust in your care.
Shelter me in your presence and steady my heart
when answers seem slow to come.
Teach me to praise you even in uncertain times,
and let my life reflect your love and faithfulness. Amen.

Symbols of Early Christian Art — The Phoenix

Based on prof. László Vanyó's book

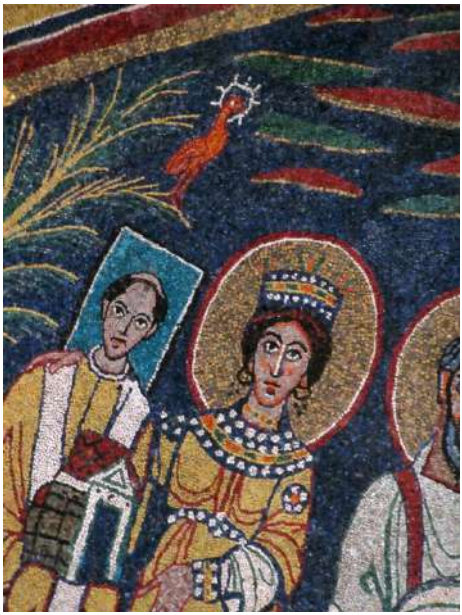
The phoenix is one of the most striking mythical creatures of the ancient world. Known across Egyptian, Greek, and Roman cultures, it was described as a unique bird that lived for an extraordinarily long time and renewed itself through fire. At the end of its life, the phoenix was believed to build a nest of fragrant materials, allow itself to be consumed by flames, and then rise again from its own ashes. This powerful image of death followed by renewed life captured the imagination of ancient authors and later found a meaningful place in early Christian thought.

In its original context, the phoenix was closely associated with the sun, the passage of time, and cosmic order. Its repeated cycle of death and rebirth symbolised continuity and renewal in nature. Because of this, the phoenix was often understood as a sign that life could overcome decay and destruction. These associations made the bird particularly attractive to early Christians, who were seeking ways to express their belief in resurrection in a world shaped by classical culture.

Rather than rejecting the phoenix as a pagan symbol, early Christian writers recognised its potential to convey Christian hope. The story of a creature rising from ashes offered a vivid parallel to the belief in life after death. Although the phoenix was not presented as a literal proof of Christian doctrine, it served as a helpful image that made the idea of resurrection more understandable to those familiar with ancient myths. If renewal could be imagined even within nature or legend, then belief in resurrection no longer seemed entirely foreign or irrational.

For this reason, the phoenix appears in several early Christian texts as an illustrative example. It was used to show that the resurrection of the body was not an impossible concept. These references did not place the phoenix on the same level as divine revelation, but treated it as a sign pointing toward a deeper truth. The resurrection promised by Christianity was grounded not in myth, but in God's action in history, especially in the resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless, the phoenix helped to explain this belief in a language that ancient audiences could grasp.

The symbolic value of the phoenix extended beyond literature into early Christian art. It appears in funerary settings, especially in tomb decorations, where it served as a visual expression of hope. In places associated with death and mourning, the image of a bird rising from ashes communicated the promise that death does not have the final word. In this context, the phoenix often functioned as an indirect reference to Christ, whose death and resurrection stand at the centre of Christian faith.



The use of the phoenix also reveals something important about the way early Christianity interacted with its cultural environment. The Church did not develop its symbols in isolation, but engaged creatively with the imagery and ideas of the surrounding world. Familiar symbols were reinterpreted and given new meaning in the light of the Gospel. The phoenix is a clear example of this process: a pagan image transformed into a sign of Christian hope.

At the same time, Christian authors were careful to maintain a clear distinction between symbol and belief. The phoenix was never meant to replace the doctrine of resurrection or to be understood as a literal event. Unlike the mythical cycle of the phoenix, Christian resurrection is not a natural or repetitive process, but a unique act of God. The value of the phoenix lies in its ability to point beyond itself, helping believers reflect on the mystery of new life after death.

Through the image of the phoenix, early Christians found a way to speak about resurrection with imagination and confidence. The symbol communicates continuity and transformation, reminding believers that Christian hope is not about escaping the world, but about its renewal. From ashes comes new life; from death comes resurrection. This conviction, expressed through both words and images, remains central to Christian faith and continues to offer comfort and hope in the face of death.

First image — Phoenix in a Burning Nest: Fresco from the "Greek Chapel" (Capella Greca) in the Catacomb of Priscilla, Mid-3rd Century, Rome; Second image — Phoenix in a Palm Tree: Mosaic from the Apse at St. Praxedes Basilica, Mid-9th Century, Rome.

Faith

Irene Leader writes:

Faith starts by believing who God is, and Scripture reveals who God is through His Names. In the biblical tradition, a name is never merely a label but expresses character, mission, and nature. Jesus, the Son of God, fully manifests God's character and nature in a way that is visible, personal, and relational. To know Jesus, and his Name, is therefore to know God.

Trying to keep the Law by our own works, by our own efforts alone, cannot attain righteousness. The Law does help us to see what is sin and what is not. It tells us what we should do. It also makes us see how we fall short of God's will. But the Law cannot attain righteousness for us; we are made righteous by faith in Jesus Christ alone (Rom 3,10–22a). In other words, righteousness is not earned but received; it is a gift of grace.

There is suffering and persecution for the faith. There are different types of suffering.

Firstly, suffering may mean that we are being ridiculed, ostracised, imprisoned, or even facing death. Suffering persecution for Christ's sake often comes as a result of doing the work of the Gospel or faithfully fulfilling our call, as we see in the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr (Acts 7,54–59). From this we understand that faithful discipleship may involve suffering of this kind. However, such suffering does not come from God as a punishment or as an act of cruelty. God does not desire evil for His children. God is not going to make you sick in order to make you suffer for Him.

Secondly, there is suffering that comes from sickness, illness, or disease—these are consequences of a fallen world and are not endorsed by God as goods in themselves. This suffering in itself is not related to faith or to the Gospel. At the same time, when this second type of suffering does occur, God can transform it and unite it to Christ's redemptive suffering, giving it meaning and grace.

Jesus gave the disciples power and authority—the right and the mission to act in His Name. "*When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick*" (Luke 9,1–2). This reveals the compassionate character and healing nature of God. This same truth is reflected in God's Names, such as YHWH-Rophe, which means "*The Lord who heals*" (Ex 15,26). Healing, restoration, and mercy are therefore signs of God's Kingdom breaking into the world.

Faith is about who God is. Since He has made us righteous in Christ, faith always leads to good works, since He also gives us the grace and power

to do them. Good works are not the source of faith or righteousness, but their fruit. Doing works does not produce faith, nor does it earn righteousness; rather, authentic faith naturally expresses itself in action.

With the words of our mouth, we make affirmations and confessions that shape our interior life. Scripture reminds us of the importance of speech formed by faith and wisdom. "*I am a believer, not a doubter*" (cf. Mk 5:36). "*I do not speak negative or destructive things*" (cf. Eph 4:29). "*I am a doer of the Word*" (James 1:22–25). "*I meditate on the Word all the day long*" (Ps 1:2). These are not magical formulas but good words of wisdom that help align our hearts and minds with God's truth.

"Confessions" and "declarations" in the Name of Jesus—such as, for example, "*I am not sick,*" when effectively I *am* sick—are not magic formulas and will not work. Faith does not require denying reality. Rather, faith means we do not deny our condition but instead believe in God's promise within it. The promise is what we cannot yet see, and trusting that promise is wisdom. When we try hard to deny reality—for example that I am sick— we often end up focusing on it even more. In doing so, we may reinforce patterns of fear, pain, or difficulty in our minds and hearts.

We can use an example from Genesis to clarify this. There is a difference between God calling into existence things that do not exist at all, and God bringing forth what already exists but is not yet seen or fully realised. As Scripture says, "*what is seen was not made out of things that are visible*" (Heb 11:3, ESV). Faith trusts that God is already at work beyond what is immediately apparent. This is faith. Faith increases wisdom, and wisdom in turn strengthens faith. Over time, this builds a "track record" of trust and experience, which becomes evidence not merely in theory but in life itself.

Are you praying for God to give you enough faith to stop doing what you do not want to do? Simply waiting passively will not bring transformation. Faith involves cooperation with God and is grace. Your faith is your responsibility in the sense that you must actively engage with it—no one can do this interior work for you. You need to mix faith in your heart with God's promises, allowing grace to shape your will, and you need to take responsibility for guarding your mind and heart.

Faith says: I believe God is who He says He is. I believe that He is good, and good only, and that He does not change. Faith requires trust and is complete confidence in this truth, even when circumstances seem to contradict it. This is the difference between a living faith, which is relational and rooted in trust, and a merely legalistic faith that remains at the level of knowledge alone. As Clint Byars aptly states, "*Faith does not move God—it positions you to be moved by God.*"

Iran, the Quran, and the West

Revised version of Dr Marcus Peter's article in 17 January 2026 issue of CWR

What is unfolding in Iran today cannot be understood without taking religion seriously. The Islamic Republic is not merely an authoritarian state that happens to use religious language; it is a political system explicitly grounded in a particular interpretation of Islam, one that fuses theology, law, and coercive power. Yet to understand Iran accurately, it is essential to distinguish between Islam as a diverse religious tradition and the specific revolutionary Shiʿite ideology that governs the Iranian state.

The Iranian theocracy emerged from the 1979 revolution, but its intellectual roots extend further back. It draws on Shiʿite traditions that emphasise clerical authority, martyrdom, and resistance to illegitimate rule, combined with modern revolutionary thought. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's doctrine of *velāyat-e faqīh*—the guardianship of the Islamic jurist—was not a timeless Islamic consensus, but a radical innovation that elevated clerics from moral guides to absolute political rulers. Many Shiʿite scholars, both historically and today, have rejected this model.

Islamic history itself does not present a single, uniform pattern of governance. Muslim-ruled societies ranged widely, from highly centralised empires to relatively pluralistic arrangements. While early caliphates fused religion and rule, later Islamic polities often governed pragmatically, borrowing administrative practices from Byzantium, Persia, and beyond. Jewish and Christian communities lived for centuries under Islamic rule with varying degrees of autonomy, sometimes facing discrimination, sometimes flourishing. These realities complicate any claim that Islam mandates a single political outcome.

At the same time, it would be dishonest to deny that Islamic texts include passages that have been used to justify coercion, warfare, and hierarchy. Verses such as Surah 9:29, concerning fighting nonbelievers, and Surah 4:34, addressing male authority in the family, have historically shaped legal and social norms. In some interpretations, they have been read literally and enforced harshly. In others, they have been contextualised, limited, or reinterpreted. Islamic jurisprudence developed a wide range of schools and methods precisely because the texts themselves require interpretation.

Iran's ruling ideology represents one of the most rigid and absolutist readings of these sources. In this framework, law derives directly from divine command, dissent is treated as rebellion against God, and violence becomes morally legitimate when framed as defence of Islam. This helps explain the

regime's use of public executions, intimidation, and spectacle. Such acts function not only as punishment but as religious pedagogy, reinforcing the idea that political authority exercises divine judgment over life and death.

Recent Iranian state rhetoric, including a video threatening Donald Trump, must be read within this ideological context. Iranian leaders often speak in symbolic, theological language meant to resonate domestically and regionally. The long-standing designation of the United States as the "Great Satan," popularised during the 1979 revolution, reflects more than geopolitical hostility. It expresses a worldview in which Western political freedom, religious pluralism, and individual rights are seen as moral rebellion against divine order.

Yet even here, precision matters. Hostility toward the West is not inherent to Islam as such. Many Muslim societies coexist peacefully with secular states, democratic institutions, and pluralistic norms. Countries such as Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco, and even Turkey at various points demonstrate that Islam can be interpreted in ways compatible—though sometimes tensely—with modern political life. Where stability exists, it often reflects compromises between religious tradition and civic law, not total religious enforcement.

Iran's internal unrest reveals another crucial truth: religious absolutism does not eliminate human longing for dignity, conscience, and freedom. Protest movements—especially those led by young people and women—show that many Iranians reject the regime's theological claims, even while remaining culturally or spiritually Muslim. Their resistance is not primarily Western-inspired but rooted in lived experience under coercive rule.

The tendency to treat Iran as a direct expression of Islam rather than of a specific extremist interpretation obscures these realities. It also risks alienating Muslims who oppose the Iranian model and who themselves suffer under similar regimes.

None of this means theology is irrelevant. On the contrary, ideas about God, authority, obedience, and law profoundly shape political behaviour. Iran's leadership acts as it does because it believes it is religiously justified. Ignoring that fact leads to strategic blindness.

The Iranian crisis is therefore best understood not as Islam revealing its inevitable nature, but as a warning about what happens when religion is fused with unchecked state power and stripped of internal limits, debate, and moral restraint. Systems that sanctify coercion eventually provoke resistance, because human beings are not made for permanent submission enforced by fear. Iran's tragedy lies not only in its politics, but in the way a rich and varied religious tradition has been narrowed into an instrument of domination.

Church of England Finances

Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent (Save the Parish Movement)

Church of England Finances is a summary of the finances of the Church of England as a whole. For example, you can see that between 2020 and 2024 the total income of the Church has grown from £782m to £1,030m (32%), whereas the amount made available for parish ministry has only grown from £369m to £404m (a miserable 9%, which is a cut of 11% in real terms).

Another example: for every £10 of the Church's income, £3 is spent on administration. Most of the costs of parish ministry are covered by parish share. You might like to ask your diocese where the rest of the money is going…

The Church of England has very substantial funds at the centre:

The Church Commissioners have £11 billion funds that have been built-up over the years (top left). The 42 dioceses have over £6bn funds in aggregate, made up of £4.3bn in Land, Buildings and Investments and £1.8bn in Diocesan Stipends Funds.

In 2024, Church Commissioners and Dioceses Combined could draw an annual investment income of £653m from these funds.

The Church of England has excessive overheads:

Administration costs are duplicated 42 times over, once for each diocese. As a result, the combined diocesan Support and Administration Cost amounted to £154m.

The total spent on parish ministry was £359m and additionally there was £45m for pension contributions, making £404m in total. These figures tell us that, roughly speaking, for every £7 spent on ministry, £3 was spent on administration. By comparison with other charities, 7:3 is a very poor ratio of frontline to overhead.

These administration costs exhaust almost the entire investment and rental income of the dioceses, leaving parishioners to pay the bill for Parish Ministry. As you can see, £319m is sent by parishes to dioceses in the form of Parish Share, and it is this that funds all but a sliver of the £359m Parish Ministry cost.

In that case we might look for help from the Church Commissioners with its £11bn of assets. But here too, it is a disappointing story of Head Office profligacy. £39m is sent to fund National Church Institutions (much

of it Church House central costs) and a further £55m to Bishops and Archbishops. This amounts to approximately another £100m.

Diocesan overheads have risen in the three years 2021-24 by 29%. The number of diocesan employees paid over £60,000 has almost doubled from 107 in 2019 to 195 in 2024. In the meanwhile, the number of stipendiary priests has fallen by 10% in the last 5 years, a loss in headcount of some 700.

The Heart of the Church continues to be in the Parishes:

Parishioners don't just pay for Ministry, they pay also for the running costs and repairs of their churches, providing £1bn annually through donations and fund-raising events. The parishes pay for themselves, whilst the rest of the church spends the income from our inheritance – £653m in 2024.

All in all, the figures present a stark contrast between Head Office, which appears to be financially secure thanks to the investment income which derives from the inherited assets of the Church of England, and the Parishes which are financially stretched and desperate for more clergy. In the parishes it's scrimping and saving to keep going, to make ends meet. In Head Office, money is spent by the million on social causes and administration, little of it reaching parishes. Whatever the merits of these causes, they are not the causes that the Church of England's endowments are for. The investment income is the most wonderful gift, but if we are cutting the number of priests, it seems it is not being used optimally.

Where are the grants from Archbishops' Council? Some of the grant money remains in the dioceses' bank accounts and does not emerge from it. Another part is spent on outside activities and social causes (for example Net Zero, Racial Equality) that cannot be classified as Parish Ministry. All in all, we carry on spending from the investment income on favoured causes as if there are no financial pressures elsewhere in the Church. This spending is not properly voted on or approved by General Synod. By contrast those of you out at the nerve endings – the parishes – will know that it is very difficult, and at times the financial pressure is so severe that clergy lay-offs occur and vacancies are deliberately left unfilled, simply to make ends meet.

If you want to know more about Church of England Finances and about the finances of your own Diocese, please visit the website of *Save the Parish Movement*: https://www.savetheparish.com/

You can subscribe to their newsletter and/or follow them on social media: Facebook, X, and/or YouTube.

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The Vicar's day-off is Monday. With enquiries about Baptisms, Weddings, Banns, or Funerals, please, contact the Vicar. ***If you are in hospital, live in a care home, or are house-bound and you wish to receive Holy Communion and/or Anointing, or to make your Confession, please let the Vicar know and he will be very happy to visit you.***

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S.P.O.T. *(our charity shop)* — 01305 750951; we are always looking for volunteers!

Parish Hall & Activities — With enquiries about hiring the Parish Hall, joining the Munch Club or the Choir, please, contact St. Paul's Parish Office.

A priest is always available for Confession, spiritual direction, or for a simple chat half an hour before every Service, or at any other time by appointment! For service times and other information about our churches and services, please visit our website: ***stpaulsweymouth.org***