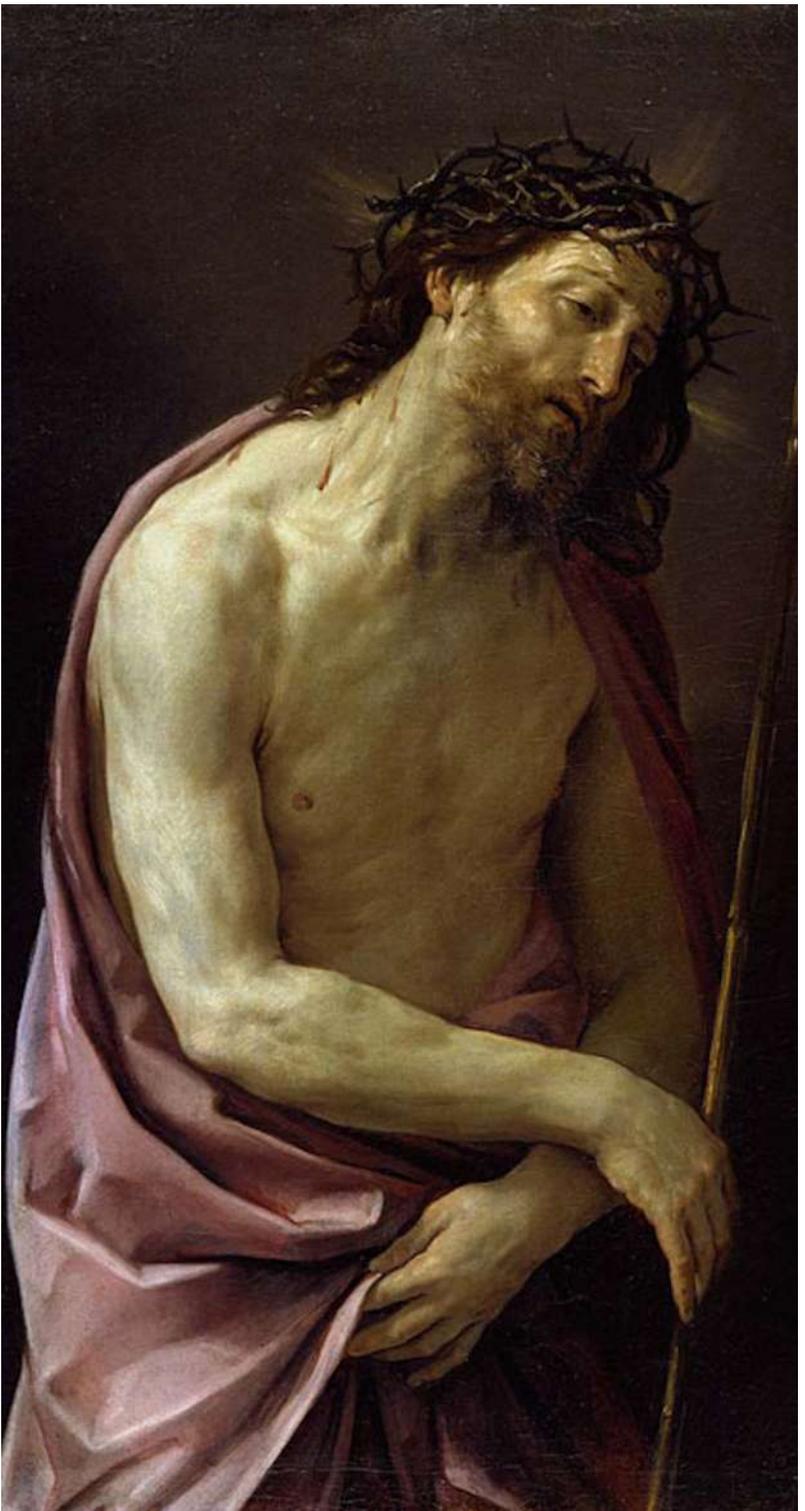


HIGH TIDE

*Parish
Magazine*

*Weymouth
St Paul
with Fleet*

MAR 2026



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Many thanks to all who have contributed to the Parish Magazine.

*The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 29th March**. Please send all articles, information or news you wish to be published by Sunday 22nd March.*

“Presentation of Christ in the Temple” by Guido Reni;
oil on canvas, ca. 1640; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (U.K.)

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

Just one week into Lent, on Ember Wednesday, one of the Old Testament readings was from the Book of Exodus. In chapter 24, God says to Moses, “*Come up to me on the mountain.*” Rather than a stern command, it sounds almost like a gentle invitation — the voice of a friend asking another to step away for a while, to keep an old friendship alive, to rest, to be renewed in quiet company. What is truly fascinating is what follows: how both, God and Moses, react.

Moses becomes busy. Two whole verses describe him organising the life of Israel before he ascends the mountain. He appoints a kind of vice-regent, sets judges in place, and carefully instructs Aaron on how to handle disputes. One senses an anxiety beneath these preparations, as though Moses fears that everything will collapse without him. As if the Exodus were his own project rather than God’s work from beginning to end.

And then there is God. In verse 16 we read that, despite the heartfelt invitation, Moses must wait for six long days. Imagine it: you have followed God’s call, you are ready to do what pleases Him — after all, the invitation was His idea — and suddenly there is silence. Dark cloud everywhere. No explanation, no clear next step, only waiting. The One who called you seems hidden.

The story does end well, of course: “*Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.*” It is not simply because of those forty days that the Church places this reading at the beginning of Lent. Rather, it is the invitation itself, and the mysterious waiting that follows, that speaks so deeply to our own journey.

Lent is not a race to spiritual success; it is a gradual ascent of the heart. A slowing down, if you wish. We are asked to put everything in second place for these forty days so that we may attend to the one thing necessary. Sometimes the obstacle lies within us: our busyness, our sense of indispensability, our quiet pride that prefers achievement to surrender. We think that without us everything will collapse.

However, there are times when difficulty comes undeniably from God Himself, or so it seems. We step forward in faith, and He makes us wait. Why does He do this? Perhaps to deepen our desire for Him, so that we seek not merely His gifts but His presence. Perhaps to purify our intentions, so that we love Him for His own sake. Perhaps to teach us patience in a world that moves too quickly. Or perhaps simply to draw us into that mysterious cloud where sometimes faith must walk without sight.

Whatever the reason, the waiting of God is never abandonment. The dark cloud that surrounds, taking away the clearness of our vision, is the same cloud that “contains” Him, too. Moses entered the cloud because he trusted the One who called him there.

This letter, then, is meant as a small encouragement — and perhaps also a gentle examination. How are we responding to God’s invitation this Lent? Are we organising our lives so carefully that we never actually go up the mountain? Are we measuring our worth by spiritual accomplishments rather than by quiet faithfulness? Are we still willing to trust when prayer feels dry, when silence is all we get from God, when He seems painfully hidden?

If he haven’t done so yet, let us slow down these forty days, to make room for stillness, for listening, for a deeper friendship with the Lord. The mountain awaits, and the invitation has already been spoken. May we have the courage to leave behind what is not essential, to lift up our souls to Him, and to discover — perhaps in ways we did not expect — that the One who calls us is already waiting. After all, the true purpose of the traditional fasting, prayer, and alms giving is exactly this. To set aside worries, to give up what is not essential, to slow down, to find time for Him. And if He makes you wait in frustrating silence, do not give up! Often it is part of the journey.

Many Christians will pass through Lent almost unaware. Others will turn it into a time of spiritual box-ticking or impressive personal achievements in fasting, prayer, or almsgiving. What a loss that would be. Lent begins not with our effort, but with God’s voice: “*Come up to me on the mountain.*” Yet this is not easy for us. Like Moses, we begin to organise, to justify, to convince ourselves that life cannot continue without our constant activity. We say we have no time — and perhaps we even believe it. We hurry from one responsibility to another, as if the world rested upon our shoulders. But Lent gently exposes this illusion so we can rediscover that God is God, and we are not.

And if you started Lent with sincere resolutions but within days or even hours you find that you have failed—a broken fast, a forgotten prayer, an opportunity for charity missed, an old habit returning uninvited—do not let this discourages you. This, too, can be part of the journey where we can rediscover that God is God, and we are not. Our failures remind us that holiness is not something we achieve by willpower, but something we receive as a gift. As the Gradual of that same Ember Wednesday says: “*Bring me out of distress, O Lord, and take away all my sins. To You I lift up my soul; in You, O my God, I trust.*” You do it; to me give only enough trust in You!

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

Fr. Gregory 5

Faith and Grace (2)

Irene Leader writes:

In a certain way, faith and grace are two sides of the same coin; and while you can have actual grace without faith, you will not have faith without grace. This is because grace is the first cause that moves the soul towards faith; faith is the human response elevated by that same grace. Of course, no one can have sanctifying grace without faith.

By grace you are also given mercy; in mercy you are given grace. Quite a paradox, and we use those words closely together, even if not interchangeably.

Mercy: you are not getting what you deserve. Grace: you are getting something you do not deserve — His strength rising up within you — not only as an experience but as a real participation in the divine life infused into the soul. You live by the power of grace. Live in alignment with God (and that, too, is already a work of His grace in you) so that He may work His will through you by grace.

The Lord is merciful and gracious (Ps 103:8–10; Ex 34:6). Through both grace and mercy, God forgives our mistakes and sustains us. Draw near to Jesus to receive mercy and find grace (Heb 4:16).

When, by adoption in Christ, you are one with God, you are hidden in Christ, which leads to eternal life: being redeemed, made righteous, sanctified, purified, protected, and made holy. This will lead us to think differently: spiritual thinking instead of carnal, selfish thinking.

I know I am not worthy of the promises given to us through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. At the same time, I also know that I am nonetheless enabled to receive them. For these promises to bear fruit, I must work together with God's grace to overcome everything that makes me disobedient to God.

Grace comes by faith, not by works done apart from grace (Rom 11:6). We cannot do anything to deserve this grace (Eph 2:8–10). Later, growth in grace comes through faith working in charity. If we relied only on our works, without grace, even one slip — even for a moment — would mean that we had not kept the law. The only alternative to this inevitable failure is grace freely given (Jas 2:10).

Our works without grace are like keys dropped on the floor: lifeless. They do not have the ability to return to my hand. Grace, on the other hand, is what enables me to bend down and pick the keys up. I am able to bend down only because of grace, yet without my freedom being taken away: it is I who do the bending and picking up, though moved and aided by grace. That

is what Jesus did for us: He obtained that grace which moves and enables us freely towards good works, not as fruits of mere human effort but as fruits of grace.

A father knows the cry of his child, and this is the way God looks upon us. God looks on people and extends His favour to those who please Him, for example, Noah, by giving them further grace. All receive sufficient initial grace so that they can be saved, but not all respond to this grace. Those who cooperate with grace have a totally different destiny from others. That destiny, in a spiritual and not necessarily material sense, is good and prosperous (Jer 29:11) rather than ungodly and sad. The Aaronic blessing shows God's favour in the way He looks upon you (Num 6:22–26).

He is gracious to us, extending His grace freely — this is unmerited favour. Inner peace is always an outcome of grace. This peace is more than tranquillity of life or mind; it enables you to hear the voice of God in your heart.

The sharing of your faith, giving what you have, becomes effective through the lived knowledge of the Lord Jesus (Philem 1:6). We are vessels of God's grace, allowing love to flow through us to others through patience, understanding, and forgiveness. When we demonstrate this, we reflect His glory.

The grace of God brings His presence through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5). All blessings flow from grace (Ps 5:12). God's favour teaches us and enables us to say no to temptation and to be eager to do what is good (Tit 2:11–14). We are warned not to abuse the freedom from the works of the Law (understood as mere external observance), a freedom given to us by grace. This freedom, because it comes from God, does not give us a licence for immorality (Jude 4; 2 Cor 6:1). Grace produces thankfulness and generosity, as the Psalm says: grace is poured out upon your lips (Ps 45:2).

Even though our prayers do not produce grace or force God to give it, we are still called to pray for it humbly and with perseverance. With the free gift of sanctifying grace, the virtue of faith is infused into our “heart” (that is, into the soul). With this faith you believe in Jesus, and further grace comes to you. This flows from His Cross, where He made you truly righteous by making you a partaker in His own righteousness. In our prayers, to the extent that we visualise, speak, think, and feel, our hearts become disposed to the Word, which then comes alive within us and in our lives through grace.

Paul said that when we come to the end of our strength, we are weak and rely on God (2 Cor 12:10). That is the point when, moved by grace, we choose Jesus, and this choice influences our heart. Faith is our response

towards God, and this leads to Christian hope — a confident expectation of good things to come, not a worldly hope of “perhaps it will happen”.

In what situations or circumstances do I have the opportunity to have faith? Am I responding to who God has revealed Himself to be in this situation? Hope does not disappoint us.

What I think matters. What I believe matters. How I respond to life matters. The emotions I allow to run their course in my life matter — not because everything depends on me or on my efforts, but because these things influence me and my disposition towards God’s grace. They can either make me more receptive to His grace or lead me to resist His work in me. Hence, when I read the Word of God and remain well disposed to His grace, hope gradually grows within my life. An example is Joshua, who entered the promised land because he saw with the eyes of faith and believed (Dt 31:23). Had his attitude been one of doubt, pessimism, or fear, he might never have responded positively to God’s grace.

With grace, and its two chief gifts — faith and hope — transformation becomes possible, and I am empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in alignment with my identity in Jesus.

Grace is what Jesus won for us by the Cross and what is applied through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit — an outpouring that still continues, now chiefly through the Sacraments. The Cross made it possible for God to offer grace as well as justice. On the Cross, truth was preserved and justice satisfied. This opened the way for peace and mercy. This is my faith.

Some explanatory notes to the article: Grace is God’s free gift that helps us share in His life. **Actual grace** is God’s help given to every person: it moves the heart and invites us to pray, repent, believe, and do good. Because God desires all to be saved, anyone — even someone who is not yet baptised — can receive actual grace. **Sanctifying (or habitual) grace**, however, is different. It is a stable gift that makes us children of God and enables us to live in friendship with Him. It is normally first given in **Baptism**, which washes away sin and infuses the theological virtues: **faith, hope, and charity**. Faith helps us believe in God, hope teaches us to trust in His promises, and charity enables us to love as He loves.

The **sacraments** nourish and restore this life of grace. The Eucharist strengthens charity, while Reconciliation restores sanctifying grace if it has been lost through serious sin. In this way, actual grace calls everyone towards God, while sanctifying grace transforms those who receive and live in His friendship.

More unusual cultural facts from around the world

Jeanne James writes:

1. Japan has “crying sumo” festivals where adults intentionally make babies cry—because it’s believed to bring good health and ward off evil spirits.
2. In Denmark, parents often leave their babies sleeping in buggies outside cafés while they eat inside. Totally normal there.
3. In Bolivia, people celebrate Día de las Ñatitas by decorating real human skulls with flowers and hats for protection and luck.
4. South Korea age system traditionally considers you 1 year old at birth, and everyone ages up together on New Year’s Day.
5. In Spain (Buñol), there’s an annual festival where people throw over 100 tons of tomatoes at each other—pure chaos, zero regrets.
6. In Germany, it’s rude to wish happy birthday before the actual day.
7. Masai warriors in Kenya and Tanzania greet each other by spitting as a sign of respect and blessing.
8. In Estonia, people commonly enjoy public saunas together, regardless of gender—nakedness is neutral, not awkward.
9. In China, white is associated with death and funerals, not weddings.
10. In Iceland, many people genuinely believe in elves and hidden folk—and construction projects have been rerouted to avoid “elf habitats.”
11. In Papua New Guinea’s Dani tribe, women traditionally cut off a finger joint when a close family member dies as a sign of grief.
12. In Italy, asking for extra cheese on seafood pasta can get you serious side-eye—it’s considered a culinary crime.
13. In Madagascar, families perform Famadihana, a ritual where they exhume ancestors, rewrap them, dance, and celebrate together.
14. In Russia, smiling at strangers without a reason can be seen as insincere or strange.
15. In Nepal, there’s a living goddess called the Kumari, a young girl believed to be the physical incarnation of a deity.
16. In Brazil, showing up very late to a party is often more polite than arriving on time.
17. In Mongolia, it’s polite to accept food or gifts with your right hand supported by your left elbow.
18. In Indonesia (Toraja culture), the dead may stay in the family home for months or years until funeral rituals are completed.
19. In Finland, silence in conversation is comfortable and respectful.
20. In Venezuela, some people sleep with a string tied to their toe on Christmas Eve so friends can tug it to wake them for early celebrations.

To know and do God's will

A practical guide, highly fitting for Lent, based on St Ignatius of Loyola

Because we are rational human beings, it is best for us not only to do God's will, but also first to know God's will and to choose to do it freely.

Spirituality rooted in life

“May you attain full knowledge of God's will through perfect wisdom and spiritual insight” (Col 1:9b). After a serious leg wound in battle, Ignatius returned home to recover. During this time he read books on the life of Christ and the saints. As he reflected, he noticed a pattern: thoughts of Christ and the saints brought lasting joy, while worldly fantasies gave only brief pleasure. This insight became the beginning of his conversion. The key principles of his spirituality:

- Human beings are created for God and are called to pursue that end wholeheartedly.
- The spiritual life involves a fundamental choice for Christ and his Kingdom.
- Our lives are influenced by many movements—internal and external, spiritual and psychological.
- Through prayer, reflection, and wise guidance, we can recognise these movements and discern God's will.

Ignatian discernment includes two stages: discernment of spirits and discernment of God's will.

Discernment of spirits

“Test everything; retain what is good” — (1 Thess 5:21). Discernment of spirits prepares us to recognise God's will. A disciple of Jesus learns to notice the movements within the soul and the direction they suggest. Some movements are ordinary emotional reactions, such as pleasure at a good meal or discouragement during unpleasant circumstances. Others touch the spiritual core of a person's relationship with God.

Ignatius describes two basic spiritual states: consolation and desolation. Spiritual consolation is a deep sense of closeness to God, bringing peace, hope, and joy. Spiritual desolation is a sense of dryness or distance from God, often accompanied by restlessness or discouragement. During consolation we should prepare for future trials; during desolation we should remember past graces and trust in God.

Those growing closer to Christ experience the action of both the good spirit and the evil spirit. The good spirit strengthens, comforts, and draws us towards Jesus. The evil spirit disturbs, discourages, and seeks to pull us away from Him. Although the evil spirit may appear attractive, its fruits lead to confusion or separation from Christ, while the good spirit works gently and produces lasting good.

In times of desolation we are called to perseverance: increased prayer, meditation, works of charity, and faithful participation in the sacraments. Sometimes desolation reveals weaknesses that need correction; at other times God allows it to purify our love and unite us more closely to Christ.

Discernment of God's will

Discernment of God's will is central to Christian life. Jesus himself came to do the Father's will, and we follow his example. Many of life's significant questions—vocation, relationships, work, and difficult decisions—require careful discernment. Usually God reveals his will gradually rather than through dramatic moments, and clarity grows through prayer over time.

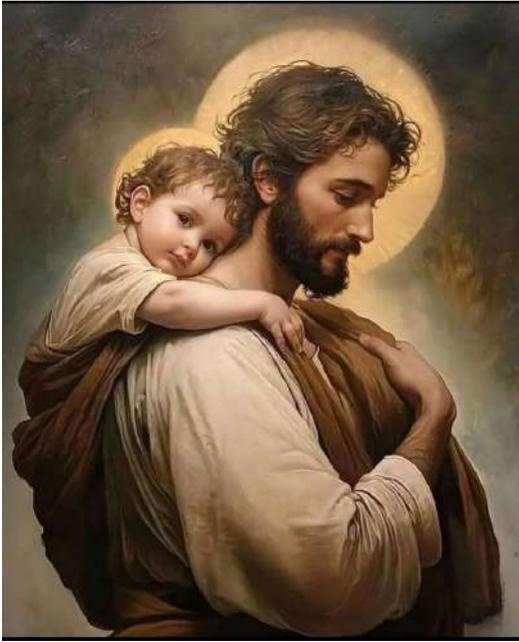
The fruit of discernment is not absolute certainty but what Ignatius calls moral certitude: a strong conviction that a particular path is truly God's will. This level of certainty is sufficient for faithful decision-making. The aim is always the greater glory of God—choosing the good that most deeply leads us to Him.

Prayer is the heart of discernment. In silence before God we listen, reflect, and become attentive to the spiritual movements within us. Our concrete circumstances also matter. God will not call us to what is impossible or contrary to the teaching of the Church. Responsibilities, commitments, and personal limitations help shape the choices we consider.

Saying "yes" to God

1) Pray constantly before, during, and after decisions, asking for guidance and confirmation. 2) Understand your present spiritual state—whether you are in consolation or desolation—and consider your responsibilities, gifts, and limitations. 3) Clarify realistic options and eliminate those that are impossible or contrary to faith. 4) Do not change important decisions during times of desolation; wait for renewed clarity. 5) Notice the option that draws you when you feel closest to God. 6) Above all, ask not merely which option is better, but which choice helps you follow Jesus more deeply and give greater glory to God.

St Joseph: The silent Guardian of Christ



What we know about St Joseph from the Bible — The Gospels speak of St Joseph with remarkable restraint. He is introduced as a “just man”, a descendant of David, and the husband of Mary. In Matthew’s Gospel he receives divine guidance through dreams: he accepts Mary into his home, names the Child Jesus, flees into Egypt to protect the Holy Family, and later returns to Nazareth. Luke’s Gospel presents him as the faithful guardian who brings Jesus to Bethlehem and to the Temple according to the Law. Joseph never speaks a recorded word in Scripture, yet his actions reveal

obedience, courage, and deep trust in God. His fatherhood is real, though chaste; he gives Jesus a home, a trade, and a place within the covenant people. The Bible leaves much unsaid about his life, and this silence has invited centuries of reflection.

What later tradition added — Early Christians pondered Joseph’s hidden life and gradually developed a richer portrait. Apocryphal writings and devotional traditions emphasised his role as protector of Mary and Jesus, often highlighting his advanced age or his purity of heart. Medieval spirituality increasingly honoured Joseph as a model of humble labour and contemplative service. By the late Middle Ages, devotion to him grew rapidly, encouraged by theologians and religious orders who saw in Joseph a guardian of the Church itself. Artistic traditions depicted him not merely as a background figure but as a tender and attentive father. While some legendary details cannot be traced back to Scripture, they reflect a desire to understand the man chosen to stand closest to Christ.

St Joseph typologies in the Old Testament — Christian reflection often recognises “types” or foreshadowings of St Joseph in the Old Testament. The most obvious parallel is Joseph, son of Jacob, who suffered

betrayal yet became the saviour of his family during famine; both figures protect life through God's providence and act with quiet righteousness.

Another figure sometimes associated with Joseph is the patriarch Abraham, who trusted God's promise and became a father through faith. King David also provides a royal background, since Joseph stands within David's line and transmits that heritage to Jesus. These typologies do not replace the historical Joseph of Nazareth, but they help us see how God prepares his servants across salvation history. In each case, the pattern is similar: a just man entrusted with responsibility, acting without seeking recognition, and allowing God's plan to unfold through humble obedience.

A brief liturgical history: Mass, devotions, and litanies — Public devotion to St Joseph developed slowly but steadily. His feast entered the Western calendar during the later Middle Ages, and by the 16th century it was firmly established. Liturgical honour grew especially in the modern period. In 1870 he was proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church, a title that strengthened his place in prayer and devotion. The Litany of St Joseph and various confraternities encouraged the faithful to seek his intercession in family life and work. A significant development came in the 20th century when his name was added to the Roman Canon and later to the other Eucharistic Prayers, highlighting his closeness to the mystery of Christ's sacrifice. The Feast of St Joseph the Worker, introduced in the 20th century, sought to provide a Christian perspective on labour. While its intention was pastoral, some have felt that it risks overshadowing the older and richer solemnity of 19 March, where Joseph is honoured primarily for his role in salvation history rather than for social symbolism.

His relevance to us today — St Joseph speaks powerfully to the modern Christian precisely because he remains hidden. In a world that often prizes visibility and self-promotion, Joseph reminds us that holiness can flourish in ordinary duties. He shows that fatherhood is not defined by authority alone but by faithful presence and protection. For families, he offers an example of steadfast love; for workers, he embodies dignity without pride; for the Church, he represents quiet guardianship. His silence is not emptiness but attentive listening to God's will. When we reflect on Joseph's life, we are invited to rediscover the value of trust, patience, and humility. He stands as a reminder that God's greatest works are often accomplished not through dramatic words but through faithful action carried out day by day.

In March, as the Church celebrates his solemnity, we honour not only a figure from the past but a companion for our present journey — the just man who shaped history without seeking the spotlight, and whose quiet faith continues to guide us toward Christ.

The evidence for and against the holiness of Anne Catherine Emmerich

Abbreviated version of Dawn Beutner's article (CWR)

Sometimes it can take decades or even centuries for the Catholic Church to acknowledge that a holy man or woman should be considered a saint. At times, the Vatican may also delay causes for prudential reasons, including international tensions. Yet the beatification of Anne Catherine Emmerich was delayed for other reasons as well. She claimed mystical experiences, and some investigators accused her of fraud.

Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774–1824) was born in a village in northern Germany to a poor Catholic family. As a young woman she tried to enter several religious communities but was refused because she lacked the required dowry. Eventually one community agreed to accept her if she learned to play the organ. She entered service in an organist's household in exchange for lessons, only to discover the family themselves were impoverished. Instead of receiving instruction, Anne used her wages to help support them, while her mother sometimes brought food. Years later, when one of the organist's daughters entered an Augustinian convent, the nuns agreed to accept Anne as well.

She was overjoyed to become a nun, but her fragile health often prevented her from fulfilling her duties. Some nuns were inspired by her cheerfulness; others resented her and treated her harshly. Although she took religious vows, secular authorities eventually forced the convent to close, and she had to leave.

A widow took her in as a servant, yet Anne's illness soon made her more of a dependent than a worker. Around this time, stories of her mystical gifts began to spread. According to family and friends, Anne had always loved prayer, showed deep compassion for the poor, and was scrupulous about avoiding sin. She spoke of visions of her guardian angel, our Lord, the Blessed Mother, and at times frightening figures.

In the convent, sisters noticed she ate very little and sometimes entered prolonged spiritual ecstasies during prayer. She also suffered intense headaches resembling the pain of Christ's Crown of Thorns. After she left religious life, signs of the stigmata reportedly appeared—wounds on her hands, feet, chest, and head that bled without clear cause. Witnesses described her as joyful and loving despite great suffering. She ate almost nothing, claiming to live only on the Eucharist.

News of these events spread quickly. Visitors arrived seeking advice, while others came out of curiosity. Some distorted her words or examined her

wounds without permission. Doctors also visited, many convinced she was a fraud or mentally unstable. Several later admitted she seemed psychologically sound, though they could not explain her condition. Civil authorities repeatedly examined Anne, bandaged her wounds painfully, and kept her under constant observation, hoping to disprove any supernatural cause. When they failed to find evidence of deception, they nonetheless declared her a fraud.

Many priests admired her patience in suffering and the vividness of her reported visions. She described scenes from the lives of Jesus and Mary with striking detail, despite limited education and never leaving Germany. Anne's health continued to decline, and she died in Dülmen in 1824. Her tomb was opened twice amid rumours of theft, and her body was reportedly found incorrupt.

Nine years later Brentano, a poet who used to visit Anne, published *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, followed by other works attributed to her visions. Some elements later influenced Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*. Scholars have debated the accuracy of these writings, praising certain historical details while noting inconsistencies.

When Pope John Paul II beatified Anne, the Vatican emphasised her heroic virtue and reported miracles rather than the writings themselves. It also clarified that Brentano was the author of the published texts, and documents suggested he may have added research of his own. Readers may find the works inspiring or problematic, yet her life itself was judged worthy of recognition.

Another criticism concerns the sharing of her visions. Mystical writers often warned that visions can be misunderstood or lead to pride. In Anne's case, however, she did not seek publicity or write books. Bedridden, she simply spoke with visitors about God, perhaps assuming such experiences were ordinary.

Perhaps God granted these experiences primarily for her own spiritual growth. Or perhaps her stigmata and visions strengthened Catholics during a time of widespread scepticism. Her writings have inspired many meditations on Christ's Passion and have never been formally condemned by the Church.

It is also possible that her influence was meant for one soul in particular—Brentano himself. Biographies describe him as restless and emotionally turbulent. If Anne's hidden mission was to help even one struggling person return to God, then her life stands as a testimony of holiness and charity.

From "The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

"Jesus fell upon His knees and prayed with deep anguish. His sorrow was not only for His own sufferings, but for the sins of all mankind, which He bore in His Heart like a heavy burden."

"The apostles slept, overcome by sadness and weakness; yet the Lord watched and prayed alone. In that loneliness He accepted the chalice which the Father offered Him, and His 'Yes' was spoken in silence and obedience."

"When they seized Him in the garden, Jesus did not resist. He gave Himself freely into their hands, looking upon His enemies with a love that sought even their salvation. As He was led through the streets, mocked and struck, His gaze remained peaceful. Every insult was received as an offering for those who would one day seek mercy."

"The scourging was cruel beyond words, yet the Lord endured each blow with patience. His sacred Body was torn, but His Heart remained fixed upon the redemption of souls."

"Mary followed her Son with quiet courage. Her sorrow was deep, yet united to His sacrifice; she offered her suffering as a hidden prayer for the world."

"When the Cross was laid upon Him, Jesus embraced it willingly. He looked upon the wood as the instrument by which love would conquer hatred and death."

"Again and again He fell beneath the weight of the Cross, yet He rose each time with gentle resolve. Those who saw Him wept, sensing that this suffering was endured for them."

"At Calvary the sky seemed to mourn. Jesus forgave His persecutors and prayed for all sinners, showing that divine mercy reaches even into the darkest hour."

"From the Cross He spoke words of compassion and hope. To the repentant thief He promised paradise, revealing that no heart is beyond redemption."

"When all was accomplished, He bowed His head and surrendered His spirit to the Father. In that moment, suffering was transformed into victory, and death itself became the doorway to life."

"Those who stood beneath the Cross felt both grief and quiet awe, for they sensed that a mystery of love was unfolding — a sacrifice offered for every generation."

"Contemplate the Passion with humility," the vision urges, "for each wound of Christ speaks of mercy, and every drop of His Blood calls souls back to God."

**Calendar, Service Times,
and Prayer Intentions**

Anniversaries of death

Order of Morning and Evening Prayer

Calendar for March 2026

SUN	1 st	2ND SUNDAY OF LENT	10.30am, 4pm
MON	2 nd	Feria	9am
TUE	3 rd	Feria	9am
WED	4 th	Feria (<i>St Casimir</i>)	10am
THU	5 th	Feria	6pm
FRI	6 th	Sts. Perpetua & Felicity, Martyrs	12pm, 5pm Stations
SAT	7 th	St Thomas Aquinas	9.30am
SUN	8 th	3RD SUNDAY OF LENT	10.30am, 4pm
MON	9 th	St Frances of Rome, Widow	9am
TUE	10 th	Feria (<i>The Forty Martyrs</i>)	9am
WED	11 th	Feria	10am
THU	12 th	St Gregory the Great, Pope & Doctor	6pm
FRI	13 th	Feria	12pm, 5pm Stations
SAT	14 th	Monthly Requiem	9.30am
SUN	15 th	4TH SUNDAY OF LENT	10.30am, 4pm
MON	16 th	Feria	9am
TUE	17 th	Feria (<i>St Patrick Bishop</i>)	9am
WED	18 th	Feria (<i>St Edward King, Martyr</i>)	10am
THU	19 th	St JOSEPH	6pm
FRI	20 th	Feria	12pm, 5pm Stations
SAT	21 st	St Benedict Abbot	9.30am
SUN	22 nd	PASSION SUNDAY	10.30am, 4pm
MON	23 rd	Feria	9am
TUE	24 th	St Gabriel Archangel	9am
WED	25 th	ANNUNCIATION	10am, 6pm
THU	26 th	Feria	6pm
FRI	27 th	The Seven Sorrows of Our Lady *	12pm, 5pm Stations
SAT	28 th	Feria (<i>St Stephen Harding</i>)	9.30am
SUN	29 th	PALM SUNDAY	10.30am, 4pm
MON	30 th	Monday of Holy Week	9am
TUE	31 st	Tuesday of Holy Week	9am

* Anointing

Daily Intentions



Anniversaries of death

We pray for...

- 1st Our Parish - *Elizabeth Gentle, Vernon Thomas pr, Sophie Llewellyn*
- 2nd Fruitful and holy Lent - *Joan Witham*
- 3rd Chapter of St Aldhelm (Servers)
- 4th Immigrants and refugees
- 5th Priests & Vocations - *Lilian Miles*
- 6th Dying
- 7th Shrine of Wlasingham - *John Pryer, Lucien Ciceron*

- 8th Our Parish - *Beryl Grove*
- 9th Widows & widowers - *Ernest Sibley, Jack Harvey*
- 10th Jobseekers
- 11th Our choir and musicians - *Suzanne Hart, Gilbert Turner, John Haining*
- 12th Our PCC - *Doreen Legg*
- 13th Conifers - *Leonard Patt*
- 14th Departed

- 15th Our Parish
- 16th Our Benefactors, living & departed - *Jack Bibby*
- 17th Reconciliation
- 18th Peace in Ukraine - *Olive Riggs, Elfreda Paddock, Ronald Coleman, June Shirt*
- 19th Fathers (spiritual, foster, of families) - *Phyllis Lee*
- 20th Peace in Israel and Palestine - *Noel Wray, Grant Goodwin*
- 21st Refugees and migrants - *John McCaig*

- 22nd Our Parish - *Vera Sertin*
- 23rd Spiritual renewal of our Parish - *Charles Seyfang, Graham Hardick*
- 24th Catholic Societies - *Cyril Croxford, Mark Houghton, Ruth Edgar*
- 25th Our Parish
- 26th The spread of Christ's Gospel - *Muriel Curley*
- 27th Bereaved mothers - *Doreen Mounce, Bernard Collick*
- 28th Cell of O.L.W. - *Ann Uphill, Peggy Moore*

- 29th Our Parish - *George Hornby*
- 30th Victims of human trafficking
- 31st Those who visited our church this month - *Martyn Fisher pr.*

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

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.

In prayer together let us fall,
And cry for mercy, one and all,
And weep before the Judge's feet,
And his avenging wrath entreat.

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	Psalm 74	Jeremiah 22,1-9 Matthew 8,1-13	3	50	Genesis 44,1-17 Hebrews 2,1-9
2	26, 32	Genesis 43,16-end Hebrews 1	4	35	Genesis 44,18-end Hebrews 2,10-end

5	34	Genesis 45,1-15 Hebrews 3,1-6	19	25, 147 v. 1-12	Isaiah 11,1-10 Matthew 13,54-end
6	40, 41	Genesis 45,16-end Hebrews 3,7-end	20	102	Exodus 5 Hebrews 10,26-end
7	3, 25	Genesis 46,1-7 & 28-end Hebrews 4	21	32	Exodus 6 Hebrews 11,1-16
8	46	Amos 7,10-end 2 Corinthians 1,1-11	22	86	Jeremiah 31,27-37 John 12,20-33
9	5, 7	Genesis 47 Hebrews 5	23	73, 121	Exodus 7 Hebrews 11,17-31
10	6, 9	Genesis 48 Hebrews 6,1-12	24	35, 123	Exodus 8 Hebrews 11,32-end
11	38	Genesis 49 Hebrews 6,13-end	25	111, 113	1 Samuel 2,1-10 Romans 5,12-end
12	56, 57	Genesis 50 Hebrews 7,1-10	26	40, 125	Exodus 9 Hebrews 12
13	22	Exodus 1 Hebrews 7,11-end	27	22, 126	Exodus 10 Hebrews 13,1-16
14	31	Exodus 2,1-10 Hebrews 8	28	23, 127	Exodus 11 Hebrews 3,17-end
15	19	Isaiah 43,1-7 Ephesians 2,8-14	29	61, 62	Zechariah 9,9-12 Luke 16,19-end
16	70, 77	Exodus 2,11-end Hebrews 9,1-14	30	41	Lamentations 1,1-12 Luke 22,1-23
17	54, 79	Exodus 3 Hebrews 9,15-end	31	27	Lamentations 3,1-18 Luke 22,24-53
18	63, 90	Exodus 4 Hebrews 10,1-25			

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS – *One of the following antiphons is used:*

Ant: 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.

Ant: 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:*

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.

EVENING 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 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

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 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.

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

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 135	Numbers 21,4-9 Luke 14,27-33	7	23, 27	Jeremiah 10,17-end John 7,25-36
2	70, 74	Jeremiah 7,21-end John 6,41-51	8	40	Joshua 1,1-9 Ephesians 6,10-20
3	52, 53, 54	Jeremiah 8 John 6,52-59	9	11, 17	Jeremiah 11,1-17 John 7,37-end
4	3, 51	Jeremiah 9,1-11 John 6,60-end	10	61, 62, 64	Jeremiah 11,18-end John 8,1-11
5	71	Jeremiah 9,12-end John 7,1-13	11	36, 39	Jeremiah 12 John 8,12-30
6	6, 38	Jeremiah 10,1-16 John 7,14-24	12	59, 60	Jeremiah 13 John 8,31-47

13	69	Jeremiah 14 John 8,48-end	23	26, 27	Jeremiah 20 John 11,28-end
14	116, 130	Jeremiah 15 John 9,1-17	24	85	Genesis 3,8-15 Galatians 4,1-5
15	31 v. 1-16	Prayer of Manasseh James 5	25	131, 146	Isaiah 52,1-12 Hebrews 2
16	25, 28	Jeremiah 16 John 9,18-end	26	42, 43	Jeremiah 21 John 12,1-19
17	80, 82	Jeremiah 17 John 10,1-21	27	31	Jeremiah 22 John 12,20-36
18	132	Hosea 11,1-9 Luke 2,41-end	28	128, 129, 130	Jeremiah 23 John 12,36-end
19	1, 112	Genesis 50,22-end Matthew 2,13-end	29	80	Isiah 5,1-7 Matthew 21,33-end
20	13, 16	Jeremiah 18 John 10,22-end	30	25	Lamentation 2,8-19 Colossians 1,18-23
21	140, 141, 142	Jeremiah 19 John 11,1-27	31	55 v. 13-24	Lamentations 3,40-51 Galatians 6,11-end
22	30	Lamentations 3,19-33 Matthew 20,17-end			

Each reading ends with these words:

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

MAGNIFICAT

Ant: 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.

Ant: 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 (world), for those in need, our Benefactors, and for the dead. Then one of the following Collects is said:

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.

Prayers for Passion-tide

I beseech you, most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, grant that your Passion may be to me a power by which I may be strengthened, protected, and defended. May your wounds be to me food and drink, by which I may be nourished, inebriated, and overjoyed. May the sprinkling of your Blood be to me an ablution for all my sins. May your death prove to me life everlasting, and your cross eternal glory. In these be my refreshment, my joy, my preservation, and sweetness of heart. Who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.

Passion of Christ! Strengthen me under the pressure of temptation. Strengthen me to do Your Will, My God. Strengthen me in moments of suffering, in times of loneliness, in periods of depression. Strengthen me that I may never swerve from You, dear Christ. Strengthen me to accept my cross and carry it generously to the end. On the battlefield of life, stand by me that I may share in your victory. Amen.

O my good Jesus, my dear Saviour, I compassionate Thee in Thy sufferings. I fervently bless Thee and thank Thee for all Thou hast suffered for me; give me grace to weep over the sins and the ingratitude which caused Thy dreadful agony. Sweet Jesus, pardon me for my past indifference to Thy love. Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us, set our hearts on fire with love of Thee. May those bonds which confined Thy hands burst the fetters of my sins! I cast myself at Thy Sacred feet, O my King and my God. Thou hast undergone the humiliation of allowing Thyself to be bound by Thy creatures; may I place my happiness in sharing Thy humiliations, and carrying Thy Cross. Amen.

O Precious Blood of Jesus, infinite price of sinful man's redemption, both drink and laver of our souls, Thou who dost plead continually the cause of man before the throne of infinite mercy; from the depths of my heart, I adore Thee, and so far as I am able, I would requite Thee for the insults and outrages which Thou dost continually receive from human beings, and especially from those who rashly dare to blaspheme Thee. Who would not bless this Blood of infinite value? Who doth not feel within himself the fire of the love of Jesus who shed it all for us? What would be my fate, had I not been redeemed by this Divine Blood? Who hath drawn it from the veins of my Saviour, even to the last drop? Ah, this surely was the work of love. O infinite love, which has given us this saving balm! O balm beyond all price, welling up from the fountain of infinite love, grant that every heart and every tongue may be enabled to praise Thee, magnify Thee and give Thee thanks both now and for evermore. Amen.

Holy Week

Palm Sunday: Procession and Passion — *Liturgy*: We begin with blessing palms, recalling Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and then hear the Passion narrative. It is a day of sorrow as well (purple): the crowd that cries "Hosanna" soon will cry "Crucify him". *Life-event of Christ*: Jesus enters the Holy City as King, yet He comes in humility, knowing the suffering that awaits Him. The liturgy invites us to recognise our own shifting hearts and to follow Him faithfully through the week ahead.

Spy Wednesday Tenebrae: Shadows and Watchfulness — *Liturgy*: Candles are gradually extinguished, psalms are chanted in a mournful way, and the church falls into darkness. Tenebrae is marked by stillness, lament, and expectation. *Life-event of Christ*: This service recalls the deepening betrayal surrounding Jesus — Judas's plotting, the loneliness of the Lord, and the gathering night before the Passion. We stand with Him as the light seems to fade, trusting that God's purpose is not overcome by darkness.

Maundy Thursday: Mass of the Supper and Vigil — *Liturgy*: The Eucharist is celebrated with solemnity; the altar is later stripped, and a vigil of prayer follows. The focus is thanksgiving, service, and watchfulness. *Life-event of Christ*: At the Last Supper, Jesus gives His Body and Blood and teaches His disciples to love one another. In Gethsemane He asks them to watch and pray. Our vigil echoes His lonely prayer and invites us to remain near Him when others sleep.

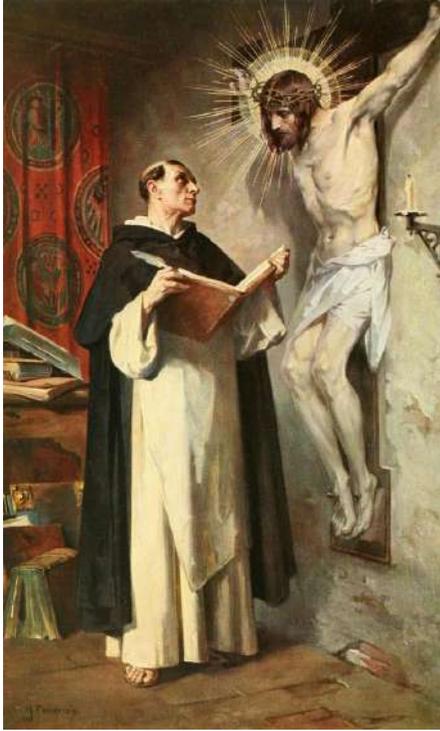
Good Friday: Passion, Veneration of the Cross, and Stations — *Liturgy*: We hear the Passion according to St John, pray solemn intercessions, and approach the Cross in reverence. The Stations of the Cross continue this meditation. *Life-event of Christ*: This is the day of Calvary. Christ offers Himself in perfect obedience and love. The creeping to the Cross is not merely remembrance but an act of personal devotion, acknowledging that His sacrifice is for us.

Holy Saturday Morning: Rosary at the Tomb — *Liturgy*: The Church keeps quiet prayer at the Lord's resting place. The Rosary reflects on sorrow and hope held together in silence. *Life-event of Christ*: Christ lies in the tomb; the world waits. The disciples know loss, yet the promise of resurrection is near, hidden beneath grief.

The Easter Vigil and Procession: Light from Darkness — *Liturgy*: After nightfall, fire and candlelight break the darkness, Scripture proclaims God's saving work, and after the Mass of Resurrection the Sacrament is carried in joyful procession. *Life-event of Christ*: This is the moment of Resurrection. Christ rises, conquering death, and leads His people into new life.

Saint of the month: St Thomas Aquinas
Priest, Confessor & Doctor of the Church

7 March



Thomas was born in 1225 into a noble family near Aquino. His parents hoped he would become a Benedictine abbot, but as a young student he was drawn instead to the new Dominican Order, devoted to poverty, preaching, and learning. The decision scandalised his family so much that they imprisoned him for a year, even sending a woman to tempt him away from his vocation — an attempt he famously resisted.

At the University of Paris, Thomas spoke little and appeared slow to respond, earning him the nickname “dumb ox.” His teacher, St Albert the Great, saw beyond appearances and predicted that this quiet student’s voice would one day “be heard throughout the world.”

His brethren liked mocking him too. Once they exclaimed: “Look, Thomas, a flying donkey!”—and Thomas looked up to the sky immediately. When they laughed at him, he said: “I rather believe a donkey can fly than think that my Christian brethren are lying to me.”

They often mocked him for his weight as well. St Thomas was famously overweight. Legend has it that they had to cut out a semicircular piece from the table in front of him so that he could sit close enough to eat. When they mocked him “Thomas, you are rather fat for a friar, don’t you think?” he always answered: “Well, you don’t know how fat I *could* be!”

His bones... — The history of Thomas’s relics contains one of the strangest episodes connected with any saint. Shortly after his death in 1274, rival communities feared losing his body, and the monks who guarded it took drastic measures: the flesh was boiled from his bones so they could be preserved and hidden more easily. It is a grim reminder that medieval devotion could be intense — and that the quiet theologian became a spiritual treasure almost immediately.

There are also lighter details in his life. Thomas' handwriting was so bad that it was nicknamed *litera inintelligibilis*, "unreadable letters," and secretaries were assigned write down what he dictated. Note the plural: secretaries... because Thomas dictated so quickly that there was a need for more secretaries simply to keep up with him. Often he would walk between rooms, dictating different books at the same time, one in each room, remembering where he left off when he last passed a particular room.

"All that I have written seems like straw" — Toward the end of his life, something changed. After a profound mystical experience following Mass, Thomas stopped writing his monumental *Summa Theologiae*. When urged to continue, he replied that compared with what he had seen, "all that I have written seems to me like so much straw." The man who had spent decades explaining God suddenly fell silent — not from doubt, but from awe.

A beloved legend captures this union of theology and prayer. While praying before a crucifix, Christ is said to have spoken to him: "You have written well of me, Thomas; what reward would you have?" Thomas answered simply, "Nothing but You, Lord." Whether historical or devotional, the story reveals the heart behind his scholarship: knowledge ordered toward love.

Wisdom for ordinary believers — Thomas's thought can seem intimidating, yet many of his words are simple and luminous. "To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary," he wrote; "to one without faith, no explanation is possible."

Even his nickname offers a lesson. The "dumb ox" was not slow-witted; he was patient, attentive, and willing to think deeply before speaking. In an age of rapid opinions, his example invites Christians to seek truth carefully rather than loudly.

A saint for mind and heart — Thomas died on the way to a church council in 1274, leaving unfinished works and an enduring legacy. Today he is patron of students and teachers, a reminder that holiness includes the life of the mind. His life shows that theology is not abstract speculation but a form of prayer. He wrote to understand Christ more deeply; in the end it was Christ Himself who mattered most. Perhaps that is why the legend of the speaking crucifix remains so compelling. After all the arguments, questions, and volumes of writing, Thomas's final desire was not intellectual victory but union with the Lord he had spent his life contemplating.

And that may be the most practical lesson he offers us today: study honestly, pray deeply, and remember that every search for truth finds its fulfilment not in ideas alone, but in the living Christ.

Know the Bible! - The Book of Esther (2)

(© bibleproject)



Esther 7-8: Haman's demise and the Jewish people's deliverance —

The next day, Esther hosts the second banquet (ch. 7). The king and Haman arrive, and Esther informs the king of her Jewish identity. Then she reveals that Haman's decree is a ploy to murder her and Mordecai, the man who saved the king's life! After taking in a lot of wine and Esther's news, the king goes into a

drunken rage (notice how many of those you find in this story). He orders that Haman be impaled on the stake he made for Mordecai. It's an ironic and grisly way to go.

But Haman's execution doesn't solve the problem of the decree to kill all the Jews. So the focus turns back to Mordecai and Esther as they plan to reverse the decree. When they discover that the king can't revoke a decree he's already made, Mordecai is commissioned to issue a counter-decree. On the day when all the Jewish people were to be killed, the people can now defend themselves and destroy any who plotted to kill them. After this, Mordecai, Esther, and Jewish people everywhere hold banquets and feasts to celebrate the new decree. Most surprising of all, Mordecai is elevated to a seat beside the king. Who saw that coming?

Esther 9-10: The Jewish people triumph — Eventually, the decreed day comes, and the Jews triumph over their enemies. First, they destroy Haman's family along with any other Persian officials who had joined Haman's plot. The next day, the Jewish people are allowed to destroy anyone who plotted against them. This is followed by great joy and celebration because the Jewish people have been rescued from annihilation.

The story then tells how Esther and Mordecai establish another decree. This great reversal and rescue will be memorialized by an annual two-

day feast called Purim, named after Haman's fateful dice. The book concludes with a short epilogue. Mordecai is elevated to second-in-command in the kingdom, and we're told of his royal greatness and splendour as the Jews thrive in exile.

The design and message of the Book of Esther — Now, if you back up and look at the book as a whole, you can see how precisely the story has been designed. The story is full of many moments of ironic reversal, but notice how the entire book is structured as one large reversal, right down to the details.

The king's splendour, feasts, and decrees in chapter 1 correspond to Mordecai's splendour, feasts, and decrees in chapter 10. Esther and Mordecai first saved the king in chapter 2, and in the end they saved all the Jewish people in chapter 9. Haman's elevation, edicts, and banquet with the king in chapter 3 are reversed by Mordecai's elevation, edict, and banquet in chapter 8.

Also notice how Esther and Mordecai's two planning scenes (chs. 4 and 8) and Esther's two special banquets (chs. 5 and 7) form a frame around the greatest reversal in the whole story—Haman's humiliation and Mordecai's exaltation (ch. 6).

Another fascinating feature of the book is the moral ambiguity of the characters. There is a lot of drinking, anger, sex, and murder, and Mordecai and Esther participate in at least some of it. Also notable is their violation of many commands in the Torah (like marrying Gentiles or eating impure food). And so the story doesn't seem to put them forward as impeccable moral examples, nor does it endorse all of their behaviour. However, they are presented as models of trust and hope in the midst of terrifying circumstances.

In fact, this focus on Mordecai and Esther's hope brings us all the way back to the curious feature of this book, that God is never mentioned. When God's people are in exile, unable to obey the Torah perfectly, and when God seems absent, does this mean God is done with Israel? Has he abandoned his promises?

The book of Esther says no.

The story invites us to see that God can and does work in the mess and moral ambiguity of human history, using the faithfulness of even morally compromised people to accomplish his purposes.

The book of Esther asks us to trust in God's providence even when we can't see it working. That requires a posture of hope, to believe that, no matter how horrible things get, God is committed to redeeming his good world and overcoming evil. That's what the story of Esther is all about.

The Psalms

Psalms 58: Justice in the hands of God

Psalm 58 speaks with strong and vivid language about justice, evil, and the longing for God to set things right. It begins with a searching question: do those who hold power truly judge fairly? The psalm looks at a world which we ourselves recognise easily: a world where leaders fail in their calling and where violence replaces righteousness. Those who hold power and authority often use these not to promote justice, peace, prosperity and the common good but to enrich themselves further. Instead of weighing justice carefully, judges allow wrongdoing to grow. *“Yea, in heart ye work wickedness.”* The psalmist does not ignore this reality but brings it openly before God.

The psalm describes wickedness in stark images. Human sin is pictured as something deep-rooted, like poison that spreads through the whole body. The hardened heart is compared to a deaf creature that refuses to listen, no matter how wisely someone speaks. These images remind us that evil is not only found in actions but in attitudes that turn away from God and reject correction. When people refuse to listen to truth, they drift further from the path of life.

Yet the psalm is not merely a complaint about injustice. It places the whole situation within a heavenly perspective. God is portrayed as the true judge who sees beyond earthly power. Even those who seem strong and influential are answerable to him. The psalm suggests that there is a greater court than any human one, and that God will not overlook the misuse of authority. This assurance allows believers to bring their anger and frustration to God rather than seeking revenge themselves.

Some of the words in Psalm 58 are harsh. The psalmist calls for the power of the wicked to be broken (*“break the teeth in their mouths”*) and for their schemes to come to nothing. Such language can sound shocking to modern ears (*“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked”*), but it expresses a deep longing for justice rather than a desire for personal cruelty. The prayer places judgement firmly in God’s hands. Instead of taking vengeance, the faithful entrust the outcome to the Lord, believing that he alone can judge rightly.

The psalm also recognises human responsibility. Evil cannot simply be blamed on outside forces; each person must answer for his own choices. Sin is described as rebellion, falsehood, and hardness of heart. These words invite honest self-examination. While the psalm speaks about corrupt judges, it also warns every believer against ignoring God’s voice or turning away from truth.

At the same time, Psalm 58 offers hope. It ends with a declaration that righteousness will not be forgotten. When God's justice is revealed, people will see that faithfulness bears fruit. The joy of the righteous is not rooted in another person's suffering but in the assurance that God's order and goodness will finally prevail. The closing vision reminds the community that the world is not abandoned to chaos; the Lord remains the judge of the earth.

Psalm 58 invites us to bring our concerns about injustice into prayer. We live in a world where wrongdoing can feel overwhelming, and it is easy to become discouraged or bitter. The psalmist teaches us to speak honestly to God, to trust his judgement, and to resist the temptation to answer evil with evil. It encourages us to remain faithful even when righteousness seems unnoticed.

The strong imagery of the psalm may challenge us, but it also reveals a deep faith. The psalmist believes that God sees, God judges, and God restores. When we pray these words, we join a long tradition of believers who have wrestled with the reality of sin while holding firmly to the hope of divine justice. In doing so, we learn to place both our anger and our longing for fairness into the hands of the One who judges perfectly: "*verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.*"

Questions for reflection

1. Where do I see injustice in the world, and how do I bring it before God in prayer?
2. Are there times when I resist correction or refuse to listen to God's voice?
3. How can I trust God's judgement instead of seeking my own revenge?
4. What does it mean for me to believe that righteousness will bear fruit, even when it is not immediately visible?

A prayer

*Righteous Lord,
you see the hidden things of every heart
and you judge with truth and mercy.
Break the power of evil and soften our hardened hearts.
Teach us to trust your justice
and to walk faithfully in your ways.
May we rejoice not in vengeance
but in the knowledge that you rule the earth with righteousness.
Amen.*

Symbols of Early Christian Art — The Star of Jacob

Based on Prof. László Vanyó's book



Among the many images used by the early Church to speak about Christ, the star holds a special place. Ancient Christian frescoes often portrayed the magi guided by a heavenly light, and from an early time this star was connected with the prophecy of Balaam: “*a star shall rise from Jacob.*”

Already in ancient Jewish writings, the star was understood as more than a poetic symbol. Some traditions saw in it the figure of a coming leader from David's line, while others interpreted it as a teacher who would guide the community in faithfulness to God's law. The prophecy was often read together with other biblical passages, showing how believers sought harmony across Scripture. In this way, the star became a sign of hope for a righteous ruler and a renewed people.

Certain early texts describe the star as bringing light and knowledge to the world. It was linked with ideas of peace, justice, and divine blessing. These themes later resonated with Christian writers, who saw in them a reflection of Christ's mission. Even though the New Testament does not frequently quote the prophecy directly, the imagery of the star appears again and again. The Book of Revelation speaks of the “morning star,” and other passages echo the same language of light rising in the darkness.

The Gospel story of the magi gave new life to the ancient prophecy. The star that guided them to Bethlehem was often understood as the fulfilment of Balaam's words. Early theologians reflected on how the magi, coming from distant lands, were able to recognise the sign of God. Some suggested that ancient traditions or teachings had prepared them for this moment. Their journey became a powerful image of how people beyond Israel were called to seek and worship the newborn King.

Early Christian teachers also spoke about the deeper meaning of the star. St Ignatius of Antioch, a bishop and martyr, described it as a sign that revealed Christ's victory and signalled the beginning of a new era. Writers such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen reflected on the magi's knowledge of the heavens and saw in it a symbol of humanity's search for truth. The star, in their understanding, was not simply a natural phenomenon but a divine sign pointing to the transformation brought by Christ's birth.



This rich tradition shaped both theology and art. In some ancient images, Balaam himself appears pointing toward the star, linking prophecy and fulfilment in a single scene. The symbol also gained importance in the Church's mission. The story of the magi showed that the light of Christ reaches beyond cultural and religious boundaries. The star became a reminder that the Gospel calls all nations to recognise the true King.

At the same time, early Christians reflected carefully on the cultural background of the story. Living in a world where astrology and magical practices were common, they sought to distinguish between pagan beliefs and the true sign given by God. The star was not seen as a tool of fate or superstition, but as a witness to God's saving action in history. In Christ's coming, they believed that old powers lost their influence and a new light began to shine.

Throughout these interpretations, one theme remains constant: the star points beyond itself. It draws attention not to the heavens alone but to the One whom it reveals. From the prophecy of Balaam to the journey of the magi, the image of the star gathers together many strands of biblical faith. It speaks of guidance, fulfilment, and the meeting of God's promises with human longing.

For the early Church, the star of Jacob became more than a distant symbol from ancient prophecy. It came to represent Christ himself — the light that rises in darkness, leads seekers on their way, and calls all people into the joy of God's kingdom.

First image — Adoration of the Magi (Domitilla Catacomb, Rome, ca. 300-350 A.D.); second image — Balaam pointing to Mary and the Child (Priscilla Catacomb, Rome, late 2nd-early 3rd century); this fresco is the oldest known image of Mary.

Reading and watching during Lent

by *Kenneth Craycraft*

While we should never shun or even diminish the essential elements of Lent—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—some adjunct activities may both subsidise traditional Lenten disciplines and serve the purpose of spiritual development. Lent can be a time to grow in our understanding and appreciation of the three transcendentals of truth, beauty, and goodness. Thus, many of us add intentional reading, listening, or watching to our Lenten practices and habits. Toward that end, I have suggestions for Lenten reading and viewing that might contribute to a rich, fulfilling Lent.

Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* is one of those novels that presents itself anew in reading after reading. No matter how often I read it, I find some new insight into the fallen human condition, the essential goodness of creation, the perseverance of the Hound of Heaven, and the hope of redemption. On the surface, *The Power and the Glory* is the story of an imperfectly faithful priest fighting internal demons and external violence as he tries to serve his flock in revolutionary Mexico. The unnamed “Whiskey Priest” is among Greene’s most famous characters, and perhaps his most typical. Like many characters in Greene’s novels, the priest roams around the margins of political, economic, and social life, and thus amidst the extremes of human frailty and inconstancy. Perennial types of Judas, Pilate, Herod, and Caesar are all here, reformulated by Greene into rich, complex characters who move the novel briskly toward its shocking climax.

As with most of Greene’s novels, the narrative reaches a deep level of psychological, moral, and spiritual conflict, which are perfect themes for the season of Lent. Along with the Whiskey Priest, we meet an assortment of cynics and hypocrites, spies and betrayers, faithful Christians and militant atheists. And like many of Greene’s protagonists, the priest himself is a bundle of contradictions. Is he a coward or a hero? Is he a faithful priest or a scandalous apostate? A saint or a sinner? The answer to all these questions is probably, “Yes.” Greene’s task is to show us that the Whiskey Priest is not dissimilar to us, the reader, in the ebb and flow of his faith and faithfulness, his resolutions and failures. Most importantly, however, *The Power and the Glory* is a novel about Christ and his Church, which transcends the failings of her members. But, oh, those members!

It might seem a cliché to recommend **St Augustine’s *Confessions***, but I am often reminded how neglected this great work of spiritual memoir is, even among well-read Catholics. Even though it is the account of the spiritual, moral, and intellectual pilgrimage of a great fifth-century saint—and

perhaps the greatest theologian in the history of the Church—Confessions is both highly relevant and applicable to any reader in any era. The narrative character of the first ten books, at least, makes the form of the memoir especially fitting for Lent.

Though he has long been in the company of canonised saints, before he was a bishop of the North African region of Hippo, Augustine was an inveterate sinner in Tagaste... and Carthage... and Rome... and Milan. His moral failure and spiritual journey are familiar enough to relate to many of us. Youthful hooliganism, adult sexual debauchery, flirtation with Christian heresies and pagan philosophies, tension with his parents, disputes with mentors, and the loss of close friends are familiar aspects of the human drama. Yet, St Augustine's experience of these things and the persistence of God's pursuit of His wayward son offer unique insights from which we can all learn. Throw in profoundly original meditations on time, memory, and the problem of evil, and Confessions is perfect reading for our own Lenten journeys.

On the topic of biography, I did not think I would find a more thorough and fair account of the life of St Thomas than Peter Ackroyd's 1999 bio, *The Life of Thomas More*. But in 2025, British historian **Joanne Paul**'s new book, *Thomas More: A Life*, may have superseded Ackroyd's excellent work. By no means is the book a hagiography. Paul presents More in all his complex humanity, as frail and faulty as anyone in many ways. But she is always fair to his life and legacy, skilfully situating his faith and life in the context of 16th-century England. Readers will find in More's life the inspiration to deepen one's commitment to Christian faith, without regard to the consequences that might follow. From Joanne Paul's biography, we can learn what St Thomas More meant when he declared that he was the King's good servant, and God's first.

Jeff Bridges has had one of the longest and most productive careers in Hollywood, making his film breakthrough in 1971 in an adaptation of Larry McMurtry's novel, *The Last Picture Show*, for which he was nominated for an Academy Award.

My favourite Bridges film, however, is the one for which he has won his only Oscar, the 2009 film *Crazy Heart*, which also happens to be a great film for Lent.

In *Crazy Heart*, Bridges plays Otis "Bad" Blake, a washed-up, has-been (or, perhaps, never-was) country singer-songwriter whose career has plummeted to the level of playing gigs at truck stops and bowling alleys. Once a promising songwriter—with one hit song sung by another artist—as the film opens, he is a chronic alcoholic, driving a broken-down pickup truck

from one dusty southwestern crossroads to another. At the nadir of his artistic career, Blake meets a journalist (Jean Craddock, played by Maggie Gyllenhaal), with whom he falls in love. This relationship sets the trajectory of the film, including Blake's continuing struggle with alcohol and Gyllenhaal's vexation in trying to help him.

Of course, I don't want to spoil the film, so I'll not say more about the plot. Suffice it to say, however, it does not go the way you probably think. But you will see in both Blake and Craddock key themes for Lenten reflection, even as these forty days lead to their resolution at Easter. (As a bonus, *Bad Blake*'s story is partly told through his struggle to write a song, "The Weary Kind." The song, actually composed and recorded by Ryan Bingham—who has a cameo appearance in the film—won the Oscar for best original song.)

Living is a 2022 British drama set in 1953, when London was still rebuilding from the devastation of World War 2. Directed by Oliver Hermanus from a screenplay by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Living* is adapted from the 1952 Akira Kurosawa film, *Ikiru*. British actor Bill Nighy plays Rodney Williams, an aged London County Council bureaucrat running one of an alphabet soup of public works departments. Along with other agency heads, Mr. Williams is more concerned with losing project requests in a mountain of neglected files and folders than with cleaning, repairing, or building actual public works. Mr. Williams is a humourless, lethargic, uninspired autocrat, lording over a team of four lower-level minions, who are both obsequious to his authority and neglectful of actual work.

But then Mr. Williams is diagnosed with terminal cancer. Realising that he has only months to live, and that he has not lived at all for the sixty-odd years of his life, he sets out to make up for lost time in a drunken bacchanalia at a seaside resort. But that is no more fulfilling than his mirthless job. Through the companionship of a young former subordinate (Miss Margaret Harris, played by Aimee Lou Wood), he tries another tack to make the most of the time he has left: serving the needs of someone else. "*Living*," Mr. Williams learns, is defined neither by inertia nor self-gratification, but rather by making oneself available to others. We watch Mr. Williams travel through the desert of despair to a life well lived, even if lately learned.

If you have given up all media for Lent, good for you. But if not, and you are looking for books or films that may enrich your Lenten journey, these suggestions might help you to learn things about yourself, God, and other people that you might not yet know. And, properly intended, they may contribute to your own Lenten growth.

St Francis of Assisi: Canticle of the Sun

The Highest, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all blessing.
To You alone, The Highest, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour!
Of you, The Highest, he bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which you give sustenance to Your
creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful
and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, The Highest, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those who will find Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks and serve Him with great
humility

12 fascinating facts about St Francis of Assisi



On January 10, 2026, Pope Leo XIV inaugurated a special Jubilee Year that commemorates the 800th anniversary of Saint Francis of Assisi's death. During this Franciscan Jubilee Year, let's learn more about Saint Francis of Assisi. Here are 12 fascinating facts about his amazing life:

1) Saint Francis of Assisi grew up as one of seven children. Born in Assisi around 1181, Saint Francis was raised in a large, wealthy family, enjoying a comfortable childhood before his dramatic conversion.

2) The name "Francis" reflects his father's love for France. Although baptized Giovanni, his father renamed him Francis, or Francesco, which means "Frenchman." His father was a merchant who admired

French culture.

3) Saint Francis of Assisi was held as a prisoner of war for a year. As a young 19-year-old man, Francis fought in a conflict against the city of Perugia before his conversion. He was captured and imprisoned for nearly a year—an experience that deeply shaped his spiritual conversion.

4) A verse from the Gospel of Matthew inspired Saint Francis' radical poverty. Matthew 10:9, in which Jesus instructs His disciples to take nothing for their journey, became the foundation for Saint Francis of Assisi's embrace of poverty and itinerant preaching.

5) Saint Francis of Assisi gathered 11 followers within one year. Within a short time, Francis attracted 11 companions, forming the early Franciscan community and mirroring the 12 Apostles of Christ.

6) Pope Innocent III approved the Franciscan Order after having a supernatural dream. According to tradition, Pope Innocent III dreamed of Saint Francis holding up the Archbasilica of Saint John Lateran. This vision convinced him that the Franciscans would help renew and support the Church.

7) Saint Francis of Assisi attended the Fourth Lateran Council and met Saint Dominic. In 1215, Francis was present at the Fourth Lateran Council, one of the most significant Church councils, where he encountered Saint Dominic, founder of the Dominican Order.

8) Saint Francis of Assisi preached the Gospel to a Muslim sultan during the Crusades. During the Fifth Crusade, Francis crossed enemy lines to meet Sultan al-Kamil of Egypt, boldly proclaiming the Christian faith and even proposing a trial-by-fire to witness to Christ. The trial-by-fire consisted of Saint Francis and a Muslim stepping into a fire, with the idea that God would spare the follower of the true religion. Francis offered to go first, but the Sultan turned down the challenge. Nonetheless, the Sultan was so impressed by his faith that he permitted Francis to preach in his land.



9) Saint Francis of Assisi prayed for miracles to cease at a friar's tomb. After the death of Franciscan leader Peter Catani, reported miracles drew overwhelming crowds, causing problems. Francis prayed, asking Peter to stop the miracles, and the miracles stopped.

10) Saint Francis of Assisi received the stigmata during a 40-day fast. In 1224, while fasting in preparation for the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Francis became the first recorded saint to receive the stigmata—the wounds of Christ. The Franciscan, reportedly with him when it occurred, said, “Suddenly, he saw a vision of a seraph, a six-winged angel on a cross. This angel gave him the gift of the five wounds of Christ.”

11) Construction of the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi began immediately after his canonisation. Francis died on October 3, 1226. Pope Gregory IX declared him a saint on July 16, 1228, and the next day, the Pope personally laid the foundation stone for the new Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, less than two years after his death.

12) The tomb of Saint Francis of Assisi was hidden and rediscovered centuries later. To protect his remains from invasion, the Franciscans concealed his tomb. Its location was forgotten until it was rediscovered in 1818.

First image: fresco by an unknown artist in the Benedictine Abbey of Subiaco, ca. 1228 (the oldest surviving image of St Francis); second image: Innocent III's dream by Giotto, Basilica of St Francis in Assisi (ca. 1298).

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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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