

HIGH TIDE

*Parish
Magazine*

*Weymouth
St Paul
with Fleet*

APR 2026



Happy Easter! **4**

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St Paul of the Cross (1694–1775) taught that Christ's Passion reveals God's greatest love. Founder of the Passionists, he emphasised prayer, patience, and trust in mercy. A compassionate spiritual guide, he urged acceptance of suffering as transformative, encouraging humility, perseverance, and freedom from anxiety through surrender to God's will and love.

Irene Leader: Adoration **16**

The passage reflects on the Eucharist, seeing the consecrated Host in the monstrance as transformed by Christ's presence. Though outwardly simple, it becomes tangible evidence of faith through belief in Jesus' words. Gazing upon it strengthens awareness of God's presence, countering human forgetfulness and deepening personal conviction and devotion.

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We prayerfully remember the dead and pray for the needs of this world.

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Because without the Lord Jesus (prayer!) we can do nothing (John 15:5) and also so that we are (or become) united in prayer!

Kris Lipovsky: Easter among Slavic people **29**

Slavic Easter blends Christian belief with ancient pagan spring rituals. Traditions like decorated eggs (pisanki), blessed baskets, and Śmigus-Dyngus symbolise life, renewal, and community. Rooted in pre-Christian fertility customs, these practices were reinterpreted through Christianity, creating a rich cultural celebration uniting faith, family, and heritage across generations in joyful observance.

Kris Lipovsky: Saying goodbye to winter **32**

Topienie Marzanny is a traditional Polish ritual marking winter's end by drowning or burning an effigy of the winter goddess. Originating in pagan beliefs, it symbolises the defeat of death and the coming of spring. Today, it survives as a cultural celebration of renewal, community, and letting go of the past.

This piece highlights unusual British traditions blending pagan, medieval, and local customs. Events like cheese rolling, bog snorkelling, and tar barrel running showcase eccentric community spirit. From ceremonial rituals to playful competitions, these long-standing practices celebrate heritage, charity, and identity, revealing the rich diversity and enduring charm of local cultural life.

Gerald Duke: When to withdraw and when to stay

The article reflects on balancing presence and avoidance in Christian life. Scripture calls believers to support others in suffering, even when uncomfortable, while also urging withdrawal from temptation, harm, or toxic situations. True discernment lies in examining motives—distinguishing wise self-protection from avoidance of responsibility, and choosing compassion, courage, and spiritual health.

Know the Bible

The First Book of Maccabees recounts a Jewish revolt in the 2nd century BC against oppressive Seleucid rule. Led by Judah Maccabeus and his family, the rebels defend their faith, win key battles, and rededicate the Jerusalem Temple, an event commemorated by Hanukkah, symbolising resistance, faithfulness, and national restoration.

The Psalms

Psalms 59 expresses a cry for deliverance amid unjust danger, portraying enemies as violent and deceitful. Despite fear, the psalmist entrusts justice to God, moving from lament to trust and praise. It teaches that prayer transforms anxiety into confidence, encouraging believers to wait on God and find strength in his faithful protection.

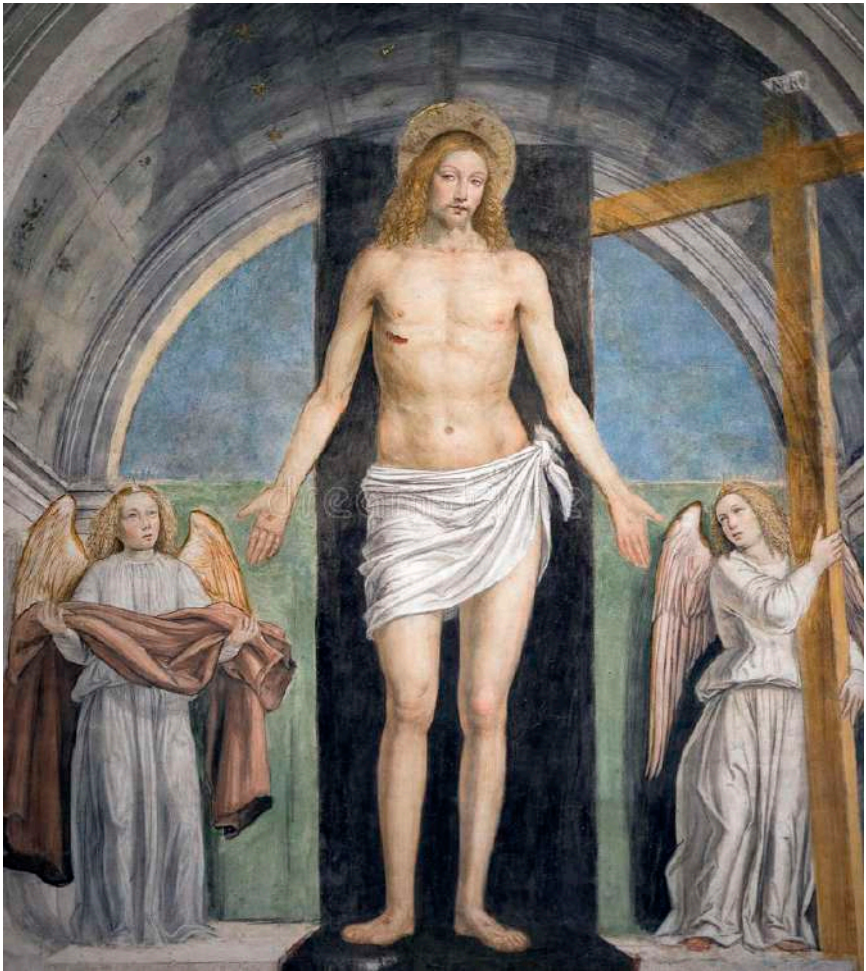
Symbols of Early Christian Art — The Tau & the Cross

Early Christians used the cross first as a hidden sign, seen in symbols like the tau and linked to biblical marking and protection. Gradually, it became central in worship, art, and daily life. Rich in meaning, it symbolised salvation, cosmic order, and victory, evolving into the visible heart of Christian faith.

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

*The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 26th April**. Please send all articles, information or news you wish to be published by Sunday 19th April.*

“The Good Shepherd” by Duncan Grant;
mural (1956-58); Russell Chantry, Lincoln Cathedral, Lincoln (U.K.)



“Fear not! I am the First and the Last, and alive, and was dead. And behold I am living for ever and ever and have the keys of death and of hell.”

With the above inscription, part of the painting, and with the words of my favourite Easter-tide hymn, I wish you all a joyful Easter!

***“This joyful Eastertide away with sin and sorrow!
My Love, the Crucified, has sprung to life this morrow.”***

Fr. Gregory

Palm Sunday and Holy Triduum

As these services are somewhat longer than other services during the year but at the same time rich with striking symbols and beautiful prayers, there will be no sermons on these days. Instead, here is a collection of short sermons for these most sacred days so that each one of us can read them in their own time in preparation before (or as reflection after) each service.

Palm Sunday: Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

Fr James Baker



In the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is enough to make you cry!

Such a bittersweet moment... The person at the centre of the celebration bursts into tears. Like a bride or groom at their wedding suddenly sobbing their hearts out uncontrollably, so in this dramatic story the Person, who is being hailed as King, given the red carpet, welcomed with excitement, suddenly starts crying.

As he approached Jerusalem (buoyed up by a tide of popular acclaim), and as he saw the city (spread out before him in all its glory!), “Jesus wept”.

Why does Jesus weep? Why does this moment of anticipated celebration take on such a sudden, excruciating twist?

Well, according to St. Luke Jesus was not weeping for himself. There would be tears later in the week—further down, on the Mount of Olives in Gethsemane, when Jesus focused on what he had to endure for our sakes. But here he is not weeping for himself, but for others. For Jerusalem. *“When he saw the city he wept over it.”*

Forgetting himself he focused on another. And that “significant other” was Jerusalem. So why does Jesus weep for Jerusalem?

1. He weeps as a long-term lover of the city

He could see how its potential was being twisted. Jerusalem, the so-called “City of peace”, did not know the things that belong to peace. And its glorious Temple, with the potential to *“be a place of prayer for many nations”*, had been hijacked into being nothing better than a *“den of robbers”*.

Like Jeremiah before, who had coined that phrase, Jesus could discern the true, underlying reality in Jerusalem's psyche. And like Jeremiah before, who gave us a whole book of weeping, called Lamentations, Jesus weeps in love for the city.

You don't cry with and for people unless you love them. And Jesus, though he had a piercing message of judgement, issues these words through the medium of the tears of love: "*How long I have longed* — he said back in Luke 13 — *to gather you, Jerusalem, under my wings*".

Jesus weeps for Jerusalem — not because he hates her or dismisses all her special past but because he loves her.

2. He weeps as a prophet who sees with crystal clarity

Forty years later the same view from the Mount of Olives would be gut-wrenchingly different. Titus' soldiers will destroy the Temple and burn the city. Jesus, with his prophetic spirit, can see the stark contrast of images. "*See what great stones.*" "*Not one stone will be left upon another.*"

The whole of this city will be surrounded by Roman siege-troops, "*encircling you on every side.*" Jesus wished to place his arms around Jerusalem but instead it will be surrounded by Roman armies. Jesus weeps as a prophet who can see and speak the truth.

Finally, the third reason why Jesus weeps is like a mammoth iceberg waiting below the water line, waiting to burst out:

3. Jesus weeps as a Divine Visitor

He said "*You do not know the time of God's coming to you*". An expression that picks up on the Old Testament idea of the day when God would visit his people in blessing... or in judgement.

There have been many hints in Luke's accounts that this visitor to Jerusalem comes as no ordinary, human visitor but as one with the authority of YHWH. With the authority of God. Indeed, he comes as God.

Jesus has just been hailed as the "Lord" and the true "King of Zion". Jesus weeps for Jerusalem, the city of God, because he is the Son of God and sees that the city of God, though established by God for this very reason, was about to not welcome its King but to reject him.

Jesus weeps as a Divine Visitor, knowing that Jerusalem is blind to this pivotal moment in its history and this will have tragic consequences for the former city of God.

The good news for us, we might think, is that this weeping of Jesus over Jerusalem is totally irrelevant. It's all about a distant, ancient Jerusalem and this Lord Jesus was long ago dead and buried.

But no! This Jesus was gloriously raised from the dead. He's alive today! And so it becomes an entirely valid question to ask: in what way is this

same Lord Jesus weeping today? What are the “modern-day Jerusalems” over which he weeps?

Many, many things!

We have an invitation here to press deep into the heart of Jesus and try and see ourselves and our world as he sees them. To get his perspective. There are many tears in the world but this passage forces us to consider the present tears of Jesus.

There are many tears in places like our parish churches and our theological colleges. In a sense there ought to be because tears are when we get real. Modern politics and religious tensions only confirm the feeling that our world is still the city that “knows not the things that belong to its peace” and the truth about the Prince of Peace is “hidden from people’s eyes”.

So what are the modern day situations where Jesus is weeping today? There are many others; Tearfund weeps all around the world with the love of Jesus. It’s all enough to make you weep.

Spy Wednesday: Into the darkness—entering the Mystery of Tenebrae

There are moments in the Church’s liturgy when words seem almost insufficient—when gesture, silence, and shadow speak more deeply than explanation ever could. Tenebrae is one of those moments.

This ancient Holy Week service is a sung reflection on the death of Christ that employs darkness and noise. *Tenebrae*—from the Latin meaning “shadows” or “darkness”—is a liturgical service of Psalms, readings, and chants that draws the faithful into the stark reality of Christ’s Passion. Rooted in the monastic traditions of the early Church and shaped over centuries, it was historically celebrated in the nightly hours of the final days of Holy Week. Today, it is often held on Spy Wednesday, the day marked by Judas’ betrayal, as a solemn threshold before the Easter Triduum begins.



The structure is simple, yet profoundly symbolic. A set of candles—traditionally fifteen—are arranged on a triangular stand known as the Tenebrae hearse. One by one, after each Psalm or reading, the candles are extinguished. The church gradually darkens. At the end, a single candle

remains, representing Christ. Even this light is hidden from view, though not extinguished. And then, in the darkness, a sudden and jarring noise erupts—the *strepitus*—echoing through the silence like the tearing of creation itself.

But to describe Tenebrae merely in terms of its structure is to miss its soul.

To enter Tenebrae is to step into a different kind of time—a time not measured by clocks, but by the slow descent into shadow. The world outside continues as normal, but within the church something ancient and weighty unfolds. The light is dim. The air is still. A few candles flicker against the darkness, as though holding back the night. Then the chanting begins.

The Psalms rise and fall in tones that seem to come from another age—haunting, restrained, yet filled with a sorrow too deep for ordinary speech. Among them are the Lamentations of Jeremiah, long considered some of the most mournful chants in all Western sacred music. Their melodies do not seek to console. They linger. They ache. They allow grief to be felt fully.

As each candle is extinguished, the darkness grows almost imperceptibly at first. Then more noticeably. Faces fade into shadow. The outlines of the church soften and dissolve. What was once visible becomes uncertain. It is not an abrupt darkness, but a gradual one—the kind that mirrors how sin enters the world, how faith can falter, how even those closest to Christ begin to fall away.

The extinguishing of the candles has long been understood as a sign of abandonment—the desertion of Christ by His Apostles and disciples. One by one, the lights go out, just as one by one, they flee. But it is not only their story. It is ours. Each fading flame reflects our own moments of weakness, our own quiet betrayals, our own turning away when it is most costly to remain.

And yet, one light remains.

The final candle—Christ—still burns. Even as darkness gathers, even as all seems lost, the One Light has not been overcome. But then, it too is taken away—hidden from sight. The church is plunged into near-complete darkness. It is a darkness that feels heavy, almost tangible. The kind of darkness that Scripture describes at the moment of Christ's death: *tenebrae factae sunt*—“darkness fell.”

It is here, in this deep silence, that the mystery presses most closely upon the heart. This is not merely the absence of light. It is the weight of Good Friday. The stillness of a world holding its breath. The grief of creation itself.

And then—without warning—the noise. A sudden, violent sound shatters the silence. It echoes through the church, startling, even unsettling.

This is the *strepitus*, the great noise that symbolises the convulsions of nature at the death of Christ: the earthquake, the splitting rocks, the opening tombs. It is chaos. It is rupture. It is the moment when the world itself seems to break.

But it is also something more. It is the sound of the stone rolling across the tomb. The hint—just the faintest hint—of what is to come.

And then, as suddenly as it began, it is over. The hidden candle is returned. A small light in the darkness. Not yet the blazing triumph of Easter morning, but not nothing either. A quiet, stubborn hope. The kind that does not deny the darkness, but refuses to be extinguished by it.

No final hymn follows. No spoken conclusion. The faithful leave in silence. That silence is not empty. It is full—full of what has been seen and heard, full of the weight of Christ’s suffering, full of the awareness of what our sins have cost. It is a silence that lingers, that accompanies us out of the church and into the night, that prepares the soul for the solemn days to come.

Tenebrae is often described as a “funeral” for Christ, and in some ways it is. But it is not a funeral of despair. It is a vigil—a keeping watch in the darkness, a waiting at the edge of mystery. It allows us to dwell, however briefly, in that space between death and resurrection, where hope is not yet visible but is already at work.

In a world that often rushes past suffering, that seeks to soften or avoid the reality of death, Tenebrae invites us to do something different: to remain. To watch. To listen. To feel the full weight of the Passion before the joy of Easter dawn breaks forth.

For those who have never attended, the experience can be surprising — perhaps even unsettling. The darkness, the silence, the sudden noise — all of it speaks in a language that is not immediately familiar. But for those willing to enter into it, Tenebrae offers something rare and deeply needed: an encounter with the mystery of Christ’s love in its most vulnerable, most human, and most sacrificial form.

It is an invitation. An invitation to step into the shadows—not to remain there, but to recognise our need for the light. An invitation to stand at the foot of the Cross, not as distant observers, but as those who know they are loved beyond measure. An invitation to prepare the heart for the Triduum, not merely as a sequence of liturgical events, but as a journey into the very centre of the Christian mystery.

And so, when the candles are extinguished and the darkness falls, do not be afraid of it. Stay. Listen. Let the silence speak. For it is in this darkness that the first glimmer of Easter begins.

Maundy Thursday: He loved them unto the end



“My dear brethren,” writes Thomas Aquinas, “the immeasurable benefits, which the goodness of God hath bestowed on Christian people, have conferred on them also a dignity beyond all price... The Only-begotten Son of God took our nature upon Him, being Himself made Man that He might make men gods.”

Tonight, we stand at the very heart of that mystery. For what does Christ do on this night? Knowing that His hour has come—knowing betrayal, suffering, and death are at hand—He does not withdraw. He does not hold back. Instead, *“having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”*

And how does He love them? “He hath left unto His faithful ones,” says Aquinas, “the Same His very Body for Meat, and the Same His very Blood for Drink.” This is the Eucharist. Not a symbol only. Not a memory alone. But Christ Himself—given, poured out, and remaining with us.

“Than this Sacrament can anything be more marvellous?” Aquinas asks. “Bread and wine are bread and wine no more... there is the Body and there is the Blood of Christ. His faithful ones eat Him.”

Here is the love of Christ—not merely spoken, but made tangible. Not merely remembered, but given. Not merely admired, but received. And this love is not distant. It is not abstract. It is placed into our hands, into our very bodies, into our souls.

“Than this Sacrament can anything be more health-giving?” he continues. “Thereby are sins purged away, strength renewed, and the soul fed upon the fatness of spiritual gifts.” This is what Christ desires for us. He sees our weakness—and gives Himself as strength. He sees our sins—and gives Himself as cleansing. He sees our hunger—and gives Himself as food.

Every time we approach the altar, we are not approaching a thing, but a Person. The same Jesus who walked the roads of Galilee. The same Jesus who will hang upon the Cross tomorrow. The same Jesus who loves us—personally, intimately, and without measure. And yet—how easily we forget. How often do we receive Him without wonder? Without awe? Without love?

Aquinas tells us that in this Sacrament “a memorial is made of that exceeding great love which Christ showed in time of His sufferings.” The

Eucharist is love remembered, love made present, love offered again to our hearts. It is the love of Christ who gives everything and holds nothing back.

And so the question for us tonight is simple, but searching: Do we love Him in return? Do we come to Him with desire? With gratitude? With reverence? For this Sacrament, Aquinas says, is “the one mighty joy of them that now have sorrow.” It is the consolation of the Church in every age. It is the quiet fire that sustains the soul. If we understood—even a little—what is given here, we would never come carelessly again. We would approach as those who know they are loved beyond all telling.

And yet, even tonight, that love will be rejected. After this sacred moment, the altar will be stripped. The beauty will be taken away. The light will dim. The church will begin to take on the starkness of Good Friday.

What a contrast. Here—the fullness of Christ’s love, poured out without measure. There—the emptiness of a world that has cast Him aside. Here—the banquet of divine charity. There—the loneliness of the Passion. And so, as we leave this place tonight, let us not leave unchanged. Let us carry within us the awareness of what we have received: Christ Himself. Let us respond to His love with love. Let us return to Him often, reverently, and with longing. For He has loved us unto the end. And He remains with us still.

Good Friday: There flowed out Blood and Water

“If we wish to understand the power of Christ’s blood,” says St. John Chrysostom, “we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt.” On that night, a lamb was sacrificed and its blood marked the doors, so that death would pass over. Yet even then, the power did not lie in the blood itself, but in what it signified—the true Blood that was to come.



Today, we stand not before the sign, but before its fulfillment. What was once shadow has become reality: not the blood of an animal, but the Blood of Christ, poured out upon the Cross for the salvation of the world. And if the destroying angel turned away at that ancient sign, “so much less,” Chrysostom says, “will the devil approach now when he sees the true blood on the lips of believers.” This is no longer a figure, but redemption itself.

To contemplate Good Friday, then, is to behold not only suffering, but sacrifice. The Cross is not merely an instrument of death, but an Altar

upon which Christ offers Himself completely to the Father for us. His Body is given, His Blood is poured out, and in that total self-gift the depth of divine love is revealed.

The Gospel draws us to a detail we must not overlook. “When Christ was dead,” Chrysostom recalls, “a soldier pierced his side and immediately there poured out water and blood.” He insists we do not pass over this lightly. The water and the blood are signs of life: the water of Baptism, the blood of the Eucharist. “From these two sacraments,” he teaches, “the Church is born.”

Just as Eve was formed from the side of Adam, so the Church is formed from the side of Christ. In the deep sleep of death, He gives from His own body the life by which we are reborn and sustained. We do not simply follow Christ; we come from Him. Our life as Christians begins at His wounded side.

This is why Good Friday, though filled with sorrow, is also a revelation. For what we see is not a reluctant victim, but a willing Saviour, who embraces the Cross out of love. Chrysostom deepens this mystery when he compares Christ to a mother who nourishes her child: He “unceasingly nourishes with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life.” The Cross is not only where life is given once, but the source from which it continues to flow.

And so Good Friday asks of us not merely to look, but to respond. Not merely to remember, but to love. For in the Cross we see what we are worth to God.

As we come to venerate the Cross, let us do so with reverence and gratitude, recognising that what we honour is the very instrument of our salvation. For from His side has flowed our life, and in His Blood is our redemption.

Holy Saturday

From an ancient Homily on Holy Saturday



Something strange is happening — there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and Hell trembles with fear. He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly

desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone, *'My Lord be with you all.'* Christ answered him: *'And with your spirit.'* He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: *'Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.'*

I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in Hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands, you who were created in my image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in me and I in you; together we form one person and cannot be separated.

For your sake I, your God, became your son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in my image. On my back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See my hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

I slept on the Cross and a sword pierced my side for you who slept in Paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in Hell. The sword that pierced Me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly Paradise. I will not restore you to that Paradise, but will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The Bridal Chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The Kingdom of Heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.

Saint of the month: St Paul of the Cross, Confessor

28 April



St Paul of the Cross (1694–1775) stands out as one of the Church’s great mystics and spiritual guides, yet his message is strikingly simple: never forget the love revealed in the Passion of Christ. Born Paolo Francesco Danei in Ovada, northern Italy, he grew up in a devout but poor family and displayed a serious, prayerful character from a young age.

As a young man, Paul briefly considered a military life but soon felt drawn to a deeper spiritual calling. Around the age of 26, he experienced a powerful interior vision in which he saw himself clothed in black with a white cross—this would become the habit of the Passionists. In 1720, after a period of intense prayer and solitude, he wrote the Rule of a new religious congregation, the Passionists, dedicated to meditating on and preaching Christ’s Passion. Ordained a priest in 1727, Paul spent decades

preaching missions throughout Italy. His preaching was not theatrical or intellectual but deeply heartfelt, often moving listeners to tears.

The Passion of Christ — For Paul, the Passion of Jesus was not merely an event to remember, but the ultimate revelation of God’s love. He famously taught that “*the Passion of Jesus Christ is the greatest and most stupendous work of divine love.*” He encouraged people to meditate frequently on Christ’s suffering—not in a morbid way, but as a means of transformation. By contemplating Christ crucified, one learns humility, patience, forgiveness, and trust in God. This focus shaped every aspect of his spirituality and preaching.

A particularly strong theme in his teaching is patience. He saw patience not as passive resignation but as an active participation in Christ’s suffering. Trials, disappointments, and even one’s own faults could become opportunities to grow in holiness if united with Christ.

A spiritual guide for the struggling — One of the most appealing aspects of St Paul of the Cross is his compassion for those who struggle

spiritually. In his many letters—he wrote thousands—he frequently addressed people burdened by sin, anxiety, or discouragement. Rather than harsh correction, he offered gentle but firm advice: do not become overly distressed by your faults. Instead, trust in God’s mercy and continue forward. He warned that excessive self-focus can become a subtle form of pride, distracting from God’s love.

He also spoke about what some have called “dangerous prayer”—a willingness to surrender completely to God’s will, even when it leads through suffering. For Paul, true prayer always involved transformation, not comfort alone.

Paul practised severe penances, including fasting and physical mortifications, which were common in his time but can appear extreme to modern readers. He also experienced intense mystical states, including visions and periods of deep spiritual darkness. Another striking aspect is his vivid sense of spiritual warfare. Some accounts describe his real and personal, literal struggles against the devil.

Yet these elements should not overshadow his humanity. He was known to be warm, approachable, and even humorous in personal interactions, especially in his letters.

St Paul of the Cross speaks powerfully to the modern world, perhaps more than ever. In a culture that often avoids suffering at all costs, he offers a radically different perspective: suffering, when united with love to Christ’s Passion, can become meaningful and transformative. His emphasis on patience is particularly relevant in an age of instant gratification. He reminds us that growth—whether spiritual, emotional, or moral—takes time and perseverance. Moreover, his compassionate approach to personal failure is deeply needed today. Many people struggle with guilt, anxiety, and perfectionism. Paul’s advice—to trust in God’s mercy rather than obsess over one’s faults—offers a path toward freedom.

Finally, his focus on love as revealed in sacrifice challenges modern individualism. For Paul, true love is not self-centred but self-giving.

Some quotes from his letters: “The Passion of Jesus Christ is the greatest work of divine love.” “Let us leave the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence.” “When you feel the assaults of temptation, do not be disturbed; remain humble and trust in God.” “Patience is the daughter of humility and the guardian of all virtues.”

St Paul of the Cross offers a spirituality that is both demanding and deeply consoling. He does not deny the reality of suffering—but he insists that, through Christ, even suffering can become a path to love, peace, and transformation.

Eucharistic Adoration

Irene Leader writes:

This Host, this Wafer, has been blessed and has been put in this pagan symbol of the sun goddess. It is no longer a pagan symbol; it is beautiful because it shines the light of Christ. When it is shown at other times, this Monstrance, it is accompanied by the continual ringing of bells. However, there are no bells this evening.

I just sit here and look at it, this Wafer. It is nothing special; I do not even know of what it is made, but at the same time it is incredibly special indeed – otherwise why are we sitting here looking at it? Is it the gold paint of the Monstrance that makes it look beautiful? Then a flash of inspiration. Thank you, Lord. How do I put this feeling, knowing, into words? We have to have transubstantiation. I can believe You are who You say You are, I can pray to You, and I may or may not see miracles happen. This is faith that I believe this, but by You being present in the Bread and the Wine at the Eucharist, this is actual proof, this is tangible evidence.

However, people may say but how is it tangible evidence – it is still bread and wine and looks no different? The answer: because I believe what Jesus said – this is My Body and this is My Blood (Mt 26:26-9). I know some Christians of different traditions may say, ‘Well, the Holy Spirit dwells inside me and my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20), so I don’t need this...’ But as I live my daily life, I tend to forget this by my thoughts and behaviour. So, sitting here, looking at the Host in the beauty of the Monstrance; this, for me, is the evidence that He is here.



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

Anniversaries of death

Order of Morning and Evening Prayer

Calendar for April 2026

WED	1 st	Wednesday of Holy Week	10am, 7.30pm
THU	2 nd	MAUNDY THURSDAY	6pm
FRI	3 rd	GOOD FRIDAY	2.30pm, 7pm Stations
SAT	4 th	HOLY SATURDAY	9.30am, 8pm
SUN	5 th	EASTER SUNDAY	10.30am
MON	6 th	Monday in Easter Octave	10am
TUE	7 th	Tuesday in Easter Octave	—
WED	8 th	Wednesday in Easter Octave	10am
THU	9 th	Thursday in Easter Octave	—
FRI	10 th	Friday in Easter Octave	—
SAT	11 th	Saturday in Easter Octave	—
SUN	12 th	WHITE (LOW) SUNDAY	10.30am
MON	13 th	St Hermenegild, Martyr	—
TUE	14 th	St Justin, Martyr	9am
WED	15 th	<i>Feria (Monthly Requiem)</i>	—
THU	16 th	<i>Feria</i>	—
FRI	17 th	<i>St Anicetus Pope, Martyr</i>	—
SAT	18 th	<i>Of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>	—
SUN	19 th	2ND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	10.30am, 5pm
MON	20 th	<i>Feria</i>	9am
TUE	21 st	St Anselm Bishop, Doctor	9am
WED	22 nd	Sts Soter & Caius Popes, Martyrs	10am
THU	23 rd	ST GEORGE, MARTYR	6pm
FRI	24 th	St Fidelis, Martyr (<i>Anointing</i>)	12pm
SAT	25 th	St Mark Evangelist (Major Rogation)	9.30am
SUN	26 th	3RD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	10.30am, 5pm
MON	27 th	St Peter Canisius, Doctor	9am
TUE	28 th	St Paul of the Cross	9am
WED	29 th	ST JOSEPH	10am
THU	30 th	St. Catherine of Siena	6pm

Daily Intentions



Anniversaries of death

We pray for/with...

- 1st Royal Air Force (founded 1 April 1918) - *Henry Biles*
- 2nd Our Parishes
- 3rd Our Parishes - *Louise Whitham, John Cheeseman*
- 4th Our Parishes

- 5th Our Parishes - *Dora Bussey*
- 6th Peace - *George Thomas, Maureen Tranter*
- 7th Our Families - *Joan Malham*
- 8th Bishop of Oswestry - *Bill Turner*
- 9th Our choir and organists - *Lawton Grainger, Richard Clarke*
- 10th Our servers - *Dennis Robinson, Betty Barrett*
- 11th Our Churchwardens & PCC

- 12th Our Parishes
- 13th Beechcroft - *Peter Biles*
- 14th S.P.O.T. - *Leslie Butler, David Hoskins*
- 15th Departed
- 16th Priests & vocations - *Parry Evans, Jennifer Lampard*
- 17th Dying - *Doris Bailey, William Waight*
- 18th Cell of O.L.W. (Rosary Group) - *Ted Honebon, Iris Hooper*

- 19th Our Parishes - *John Riggs*
- 20th Our Benefactors - *Maurice Robinson*
- 21st Our Friends - *Pat Turner*
- 22nd Our Diocese & Bishop Stephen
- 23rd HM The King & the Royal Family - *Jim Warmesley*
- 24th Sick
- 25th Those who hunger - *Molly Holland, James Cocks*

- 26th Our Parishes
- 27th Those celebrating marital milestones - *Mabel Gerhardt*
- 28th Those who suffer - *Darin Lam; John, Jean, & Scott Anderson*
- 29th Wlasingham 28th: *Alice Jenkins, Frederick Legg, Margaret Taylor*
- 30th Politicians - *Hazel Macauley, Max Hetherington*

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

MORNING PRAYER - before Easter

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.

HYMN

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle
Sing the last, the dread affray;
O'er the cross, the victor's trophy,
Sound the high triumphal lay:
Tell how Christ, the world's Redeemer,
As a victim won the day.

God, his Maker, sorely grieving
That the first-made Adam fell,
When he ate the fruit of sorrow,
Whose reward was death and hell,
Noted then this wood, the ruin
Of the ancient wood to quell.

Therefore, when the sacred fullness
Of the appointed time was come,
This world's Maker left his Father,
Sent the heav'nly mansion from,
And proceeded, God Incarnate,
Of the Virgin's holy womb.

Thirty years among us dwelling,
His appointed time fulfilled,
Born for this, he meets his passion,
For that this he freely willed:
On the cross the Lamb is lifted,
Where his life-blood shall be spilled.

He endured the nails, the spitting,
Vinegar, and spear, and reed;
From that holy body broken
Blood and water forth proceed:
Earth, and stars, and sky, and ocean,
By that flood from stain are free.

Faithful cross! above all other,
One and only noble tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peers may be;
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron!
Sweetest weight is hung on thee.

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

1	Psalm(s) 102	Jeremiah 11:18-20 Luke 22:54-end	3	69	Genesis 22:1-18 Hebrews 10:1-10
2	42, 43	Leviticus 16:2-24 Luke 23:1-25	4	142	Hosea 6:1-6 John 2:18-22

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS

Ant: They set up over his head his accusation written: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

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. *(No Gloria)*

Ant: They set up over his head his accusation written: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

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 the Collect: Look down, we beseech you, O Lord, on this your family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer the torment of the Cross. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. *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.

EVENING PRAYER - before Easter

V. O God, make speed to save me. R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

HYMN (* *The last verse is said kneeling*)

The royal banners forward go, The cross shines forth in mystic glow; Where He in flesh, our flesh who made, Our sentence bore, our ransom paid.	O tree of beauty, tree of light! O tree with royal purple dight! Elect on whose triumphal breast Those holy limbs should find their rest.
Where deep for us the spear was dyed, Life's torrent rushing from His side, To wash us in that precious flood, Where mingled water flowed, and blood.	Blest tree, whose chosen branches bore The wealth that did the world restore, The price of humankind to pay, And spoil the spoiler of his prey.
Fulfilled is all that David told In true prophetic song of old, Amidst the nations, God, saith he, Hath reigned and triumphed from the tree.	<i>* O Cross, our one reliance, hail! This holy Passion-tide avail To give fresh merit to the saint, And pardon to the penitent.</i>

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

5	Psalm(s) 88	Isaiah 63:1-9 Revelation 14:18-end	12	130, 143	Lamentations 5:15-end Colossians 1:18-23
6	39	Exodus 11 Ephesians 2:11-18	13	116	Job 19:21-27 1 John 5:5-12

Each reading ends with these words:

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

MAGNIFICAT

Ant: When he had received the vinegar, he said: It is finished! and he bowed his head, and gave up the Spirit.

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. (*No Gloria*)

Ant: When he had received the vinegar, he said: It is finished! and he bowed his head, and gave up the Spirit.

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 the Collect: Look down, we beseech you, O Lord, on this your family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer the torment of the Cross. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. 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.

MORNING PRAYER - from Easter Day

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven, alleluia. He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia. As he promised, hath arisen, alleluia. Pour for us to God thy prayer, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia. *R.* For the Lord has risen indeed, alleluia. *V.* Let us pray. O God, who through the resurrection of Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ didst vouchsafe to give joy to the world: grant, we beseech thee, that through His Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. 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. Alleluia!

HYMN

<p>O thou, the heavens' eternal King, Creator, unto thee we sing, With God the Father ever One, Co-equal, co-eternal Son. Once wast thou born of Mary's womb; And now, newborn from out the tomb, O Christ, thou bidd'st us rise with thee From death to immortality.</p>	<p>Grant, Lord, in thee each faithful mind Unceasing paschal joy may find; And from the death of sin set free Souls newly born to life by thee. To thee, once dead, who now dost live, All glory, Lord, thy people give, Whom, with the Father, we adore, And Holy Ghost forevermore. Amen.</p>
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The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

5	Psalm 114, 117	Exodus 3:1-20 Hebrews 9:15-end	13	1	Exodus 15:1-21 Colossians 1:1-14
6	111	Exodus 12:1-14 1 Corinthians 15:1-11	14	2	Exodus 15:22-end Colossians 1:15-end
7	112	Exodus 12:15-36 1 Corinthians 15:12-19	15	3	Exodus 16 Colossians 2:1-15
8	113	Exodus 12:37-end 1 Corinthians 15:20-28	16	6	Exodus 17 Colossians 2:16-end
9	114	Exodus 13:1-16 1 Corinthians 15:29-34	17	8	Exodus 18:1-12 Colossians 3
10	115	Exodus 13:17-end 1 Corinthians 15:35-50	18	14	Exodus 18:13-end Colossians 4
11	116	Exodus 14 1 Corinthians 15:51-end	19	23	Isaiah 40:1-11 1 Peter 5:1-11
12	81 v. 1-10	Exodus 12:1-17 1 Corinthians 5:6-8	20	15	Exodus 19 Luke 1:1-25

21	16	Exodus 20:1-21 Luke 1:26-38	26	106 v. 6-24	Nehemiah 9:6-15 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
22	17	Exodus 24 Luke 1:39-end	27	20	Exodus 32:1-14 Luke 2:41-end
23	5, 146	Joshua 1:1-9 Ephesians 6:10-20	28	21	Exodus 32:15-34 Luke 3:1-14
24	19	Exodus 28:29-38 Luke 2:1-20	29	25, 147 v. 1-12	Isaiah 11:1-10 Matthew 13,54-end
25	148	Isaiah 62:6-10 Ecclesiasticus 51:13-end	30	27	Exodus 34 Luke 4:1-13

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS

Ant: Jesus stood in the midst of his disciples and said to them: Peace to you, alleluia, alleluia.

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 stood in the midst of his disciples and said to them: Peace to you, alleluia, alleluia.

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 the Collect:* Almighty God, on this day you overcame death through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. We humbly beseech you, that, as by your grace you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect. Through the same 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, alleluia, alleluia. *R.* Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia. *V.* And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. *R.* Amen.

EVENING PRAYER - from Easter Day

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven, alleluia. He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia. As he promised, hath arisen, alleluia. Pour for us to God thy prayer, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia. *R.* For the Lord has risen indeed, alleluia. *V.* Let us pray. O God, who through the resurrection of Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ didst vouchsafe to give joy to the world: grant, we beseech thee, that through His Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen. *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. Alleluia!

Hymn from Morning Prayer (p. 24). Then the appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

5	Psalm 105	Song of Solomon 3:2-5 John 20:11-18	18	13	Deuteronomy 4:32-40 John 21:20-end
6	135	Song of Solomon 1 Mark 16:1-8	19	48	Haggai 1:13 - 2:9 1 Corinthians 3:10-17
7	136	Song of Solomon 2 Luke 24:1-12	20	18	Deuteronomy 5:1-22 Ephesians 1:1-14
8	105	Song of Solomon 3 Matthew 28:16-end	21	22	Deuteronomy 5:22-end Ephesians 1:15-end
9	106	Song of Solomon 5 Luke 7:11-17	22	111, 116	Jeremiah 15:15-end Hebrews 11:32-end
10	107	Song of Solomon 7 Luke 8:41-end	23	11	Isaiah 43:1-7 John 15:1-8
11	145	Song of Solomon 8:5-7 John 11:17-44	24	24	Deuteronomy 7:12-end Ephesians 3:1-13
12	30 v. 1-5	Daniel 6:1-23 Mark 15:46 - 16:8	25	45	Ezekiel 1:4-14 2 Timothy 4:1-11
13	4	Deuteronomy 1:3-18 John 20:1-10	26	29 v. 1-10	Ezra 3:1-13 Ephesians 2:11-end
14	7	Deuteronomy 1:19-40 John 20:11-18	27	25	Deuteronomy 9:1-21 Ephesians 4:1-16
15	9	Deuteronomy 3:18-end John 20:19-end	28	132	Hosea 11,1-9 Luke 2,41-end
16	10	Deuteronomy 4:1-14 John 21:1-14	29	112	Genesis 50,22-end Matthew 2,13-end
17	12	Deuteronomy 4:15-31 John 21:15-19	30	26	Deuteronomy 11:8-end Ephesians 5:15-end

After each reading: V. This is the word of the Lord. *R.* Thanks be to God.

MAGNIFICAT

Ant: He who was crucified is risen from the dead, and has redeemed us.
Alleluia, Alleluia.

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: He who was crucified is risen from the dead, and has redeemed us.
Alleluia, Alleluia.

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 the Collect is said: Almighty God, on this day you overcame death through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. We humbly beseech you, that, as by your grace you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect. Through the same Christ our Lord. **R.** 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, alleluia, alleluia.

R. Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia.

V. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

Easter among Slavic peoples

Kris Lipovsky writes:

Easter is the most important feast of the Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, as in many other parts of the world, I suppose, for Slavic peoples too—Poles, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Russians—Easter is not only a religious holiday but a moment of cultural celebration shaped by centuries of traditions. Slavic Easter is a good example of the blending of Christian faith with much older pagan customs tied to spring, fertility, and the renewal of life.

Before the arrival of Christianity, one of the most important celebrations for early Slavic people was the marking of the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The focus was on fertility, rebirth, and on the renewal of fields. Symbols such as water, eggs, fire, and greenery played essential roles in these rituals, representing life returning to the earth.

When Christianity spread across Slavic lands—in my land after the “baptism of Poland” in 966—many of these pagan customs didn’t disappear. Instead they were incorporated into Christian celebrations. Linking Easter, the feast of resurrection and new life, to spring rituals was almost natural.

As a result, Slavic Easter traditions today reflect a fusion: ancient symbolic practices reinterpreted by Christian theology. This is why so many customs—like decorating eggs or using water in rituals—carry meanings that are both Christian and pagan.



Pisanki: The art and symbolism of painted eggs — One of the most popular and most typical elements of Slavic Easter is the decoration of eggs. In Poland we call it *pisanki*. This tradition dates back thousands of years. In ancient Slavic belief, the egg symbolised life, fertility, and their cyclical nature. Often

eggs were used as powerful talismans capable of protecting against evil and ensuring a good harvest.

Once the Church became established in Poland, it kept the symbol but filled it with new meaning. And so the egg became a symbol of Christ's resurrection and of the empty tomb. Today, *pisanki* are often richly decorated with geometric patterns, floral motifs, and religious symbols.

The preparation of *pisanki* still has a strong communal aspect. Families gather during Holy Week to dye and decorate eggs, spending time together, sharing stories, and also passing down techniques from generation to generation. These eggs are then placed in blessed baskets and used in Easter meals, or are given as gifts to loved ones.



The Easter basket and the Blessing of food — Equally important is (at least in Poland!) the preparation and blessing of the Easter basket, known as *święconka*. On Holy Saturday, families bring baskets of food to church to be blessed by a priest. The basket is carefully prepared, covered with a white cloth, and decorated with greenery. Each item in the basket has symbolic meaning. **Eggs:** life, resurrection, and new beginnings. **Bread:** the body of Christ and sustenance. **Salt:** purification and preservation. **Sausage or ham:** the end of fasting. **Cake:** celebration and joy. **Butter or sugar lamb:** Christ as the “Lamb of God”.

The most important part of the basket is the sugar lamb. The lamb normally “holds” a small (red) flag with a cross on it, a triumphant reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice and victory over death.

Easter Sunday — After the long period of Lent Easter Sunday is a joyful celebration. Families attend Mass and a Resurrection procession. Mass is followed by a festive meal at home, with blessed foods from the basket. Everyone has a decorated eggs and they are cracked against each other while family members and friends exchange greetings. It is an expression of unity, forgiveness, and renewed relationships.



**Š m i g u s -
Dyngus: the playful
water festival of
Easter Monday** —

The Easter celebrations continue well into Monday with one of the most distinctive Slavic traditions: *Šmigus-Dyngus*. The day is known as “Wet Monday” or “Dyngus Day” and, of course,

it has pagan roots. Historically, it combined two separate but linked customs. *Šmigus* was the splashing of water and the light striking with willow branches while *dyngus* meant the offering of gifts (often eggs) to avoid being soaked.

The custom, until very recently, also had a romantic dimension. Boys would splash water on girls they liked as a sign of affection. If the feeling was reciprocal, the girl gave decorated eggs to the boy.

Today, *Šmigus-Dyngus* is a still very popular, lively, playful event, especially amongst children and young people. However, alongside the more traditional buckets and bottles nowadays water-gun toys are used, too. While the original gender roles have largely disappeared, the spirit of fun and community remains strong.

All these practices continue to be meaningful today because they connect people to their history, their faith, and to each other. They are more than just holiday rituals—we see a living tradition that bridges past and present, celebrating faith, life, renewal, and community.

Saying goodbye to winter

Kris Lipovsky writes:



Among the many traditions still alive in Poland, few are as vivid and symbolic as *Topienie Marzanny*, the ritual drowning (or burning) of an effigy to mark the end of winter and the arrival of spring.

The tradition originates in ancient Slavic pagan beliefs.

Marzanna (also known as Morana, Morena, or Mara) was a goddess associated with winter, death, illness, and the fading of life. Winter normally brought cold, hunger, and general hardship, so Marzanna was the symbol of the season's dark side.

As in most Nordic countries, in Poland too, survival depended on the return of spring. The end of winter meant warmth, fertile soil, and the ability to grow food. People developed various rituals to “drive away” winter and welcome the rebirth of nature. *Topienie Marzanny* was one of the most important of these rituals.

Drowning or burning Marzanna became the symbol of defeating winter and death and, so they believed, would hasten the arrival of spring.

Traditionally, the ritual takes place around the spring equinox and it obviously begins with the construction of Marzanna herself. She is then dressed in old clothes and sometimes decorated with ribbons or beads. A surprisingly festive outfit for someone who represents sickness, death, and scarcity.

Once Marzanna is complete, she is carried in a procession, often by children, through the village or town. People sing traditional songs and chants, calling for the departure of winter and the coming of spring. The whole community shares in the hope of renewal and better days ahead. At the end of the procession, Marzanna is destroyed—most commonly by being thrown into a river, lake, or pond. In some places, it is first set on fire and then cast into the water. Participants are discouraged from looking back at the

floating or sinking doll to emphasise that winter must be fully left behind, without hesitation or regret.

For some, this ritual may appear destructive but actually it is deeply life-affirming in its destruction of a symbol of cold, darkness, and hardship. Fire and Water become symbols of life returning to the earth, of change and rebirth. The procession itself is a communal act of hope, uniting people in anticipation of spring. It is easy to see how these pagan traditions could be easily linked to Easter: death followed by resurrected life, darkness giving way to light.

Indeed, while with the spread of Christianity across Slavic lands many pagan customs were discontinued, the *Topienie Marzanny* proved remarkably resilient. The Church often disapproved of it due to its pagan origins, but it continued to be practiced, particularly among children and local communities. Over time, its original pagan significance completely faded, and it became more of a cultural-popular celebration of spring.

Today in Poland the tradition is often observed by schools and children create *Marzanna* dolls as part of seasonal activities and participate in supervised processions.

Today, in a modern, urbanized world, the symbolism of the ritual still remains powerful. The act of casting away winter is now understood more metaphorically—as letting go of negativity or the past.



Weird and wonderful

Jeanne James writes:

Some weird and wonderful traditions, dating back hundreds of years, mixing pagan customs, medieval fairs, church festivals, and village celebrations.

1. Cheese Rolling: People race down a steep hill chasing a wheel of cheese. Injuries are common but participants keep coming back.

2. Bog Snorkelling: The World Bog Snorkelling Championship in Llanwrtyd Wells involves swimming through a muddy peat bog using snorkels and flippers.

3. Pearly Kings and Queens: In London, Pearly Kings and Queens wear suits covered in thousands of pearl buttons and take part in charity parades.

4. Blackening the Bride: In Scotland, friends cover engaged couples with things like flour, treacle, and feathers before the wedding.

5. Worm Charming: Competitors try to coax worms out of the ground without digging.

6. Well Dressing: In villages in the Peak District, wells are decorated with intricate pictures made from flowers, leaves, and seeds.

7. Haxey Hood: A chaotic medieval-style game where hundreds push a leather hood through fields to a pub.

8. Tar Barrel Running: At Ottery St Mary Tar Barrels in Ottery St Mary, people run through the streets carrying flaming tar barrels on their backs.

9. Toad-in-the-Hole Eating Contest: At Toad-in-the-Hole Eating Championship in Castle Combe people compete to eat the most of the classic British dish.

10. Gurning Competition: At the Egremont Crab Fair in Egremont contestants make the ugliest face possible through a horse collar.

11. Straw Bear Festival: During the Whittlesea Straw Bear Festival in Whittlesey, someone dresses as a giant bear made entirely of straw.

12. Up Helly Aa: In Lerwick, the Viking fire festival Up Helly Aa ends with the burning of a Viking ship.

13. Apple Wassailing: In parts of Somerset people gather in orchards to sing to apple trees and scare away evil spirits to ensure a good harvest.

14. Beating the Bounds: Church parishioners walk the parish boundary to remember its limits, a tradition going back hundreds of years.

15. Horn Dance: The Abbots Bromley Horn Dance in Abbots Bromley features dancers carrying real reindeer antlers.

16. Royal Swan Counting: Each summer the Crown counts swans on the River Thames during Swan Upping.

17. Nettle Eating: At the World Nettle Eating Championship in Dorset people eat raw stinging nettles.

18. Climbing a Greasy Pole: Many seaside towns run contests where people try to walk along a greased pole over water.

19. Royal Maundy: On Maundy Thursday the monarch distributes special coins during the Royal Maundy ceremony.

20. The Mayor of Ock Street Race: In Abingdon competitors run carrying a bun while holding a horn in the Mayor of Ock Street Horn Run.

When to Withdraw and When to Stay

Gerald Duke writes:

I hate funerals. I will look for any reason not to attend. Yet here I am with time to kill, in the departure lounge at Southampton Airport writing this article. Why was I so early? I had made allowances for train delays to the airport that never occurred. I was there waiting to fly to Newcastle for a funeral which, for once, I really felt that I needed to attend. This spare time led me question why I was even contemplating this most inconvenient trip when usually I would have just ignored it.

So, without the possibility of a long chat with my therapist, instead, I took a look at an app on my phone for some guidance. The good old Lexham English study bible popped up. It's a Bible written in smooth readable English with copious footnotes which cover instances where literal rendering of Greek or Hebrew would prevent smooth English translation and with explanatory notes as necessary.

It came as no surprise to find tension between engagement and avoidance running throughout the texts and accordingly in Christian life. We are called to be present with others in their suffering, yet also warned to flee from certain situations. Understanding when the Bible encourages presence and when it directs withdrawal requires careful discernment and an honest examination of our motives and that, no doubt, is where my therapist might come in to play if she was here.

The Call to Presence in Suffering — Scripture consistently emphasises the importance of being present with those who grieve. To mention just a few instances, Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 offers us: “*It is better to go to a house of mourning than*

to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart." This passage suggests that encountering death and grief, though uncomfortable, provides valuable perspective on life's brevity and meaning. It continues with "*sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart*" and that "*the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.*"

This call to presence extends beyond mere attendance. Romans 12:15 instructs believers to "*weep with those who weep,*" suggesting active emotional

engagement rather than passive observation. When Job lost everything, his friends initially did exactly what grief requires: they sat with him in silence for seven days (Job 2:11-13). Despite their later theological failures, this initial act of presence was indeed meaningful.

Jesus himself modelled this principle repeatedly. At Lazarus's tomb, he didn't maintain emotional distance but wept alongside Mary and Martha (John 11). He attended weddings and funerals, entering into the full spectrum of human experience. His incarnation was the ultimate act of presence, entering into our suffering rather than avoiding it from a safe distance.

I am now beginning to see that the discomfort I feel (and I daresay many of us feel) at funerals and times of mourning is not a valid reason for avoidance. Rather, it's often precisely why our presence matters. When we show up despite our discomfort, we communicate that the grieving person's pain is worth our time and attention. We become the physical embodiment of a community that doesn't abandon people in their darkest hours.

This time, I attended at both at the crematorium with family members and the very fully attended funeral service of (let's call her Elizabeth) in the local Methodist church, and my dear surviving friend looked so old, miserable and frail. In the bun fight in the church hall afterwards, we just hugged one another and I was lost for words. He (let's call him Ben) whose earlier sad demeanour had totally changed then reminded me that we were there to celebrate Elizabeth's life. Then the stories of the old days flowed and we laughed once more.

When Avoidance Becomes Wisdom — Yet Scripture is equally clear that there are situations where withdrawal is not only acceptable but preferable. The most obvious category is temptation and sin. When Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph, he didn't stay to negotiate or explain his moral



position—he ran (Genesis 39:12). Paul repeatedly uses the language of fleeing: “*flee from sexual immorality*” (1 Corinthians 6:18), “*flee from idolatry*” (1 Corinthians 10:14), “*flee youthful lusts*” (2 Timothy 2:22). Such situations don’t call for courage to remain but wisdom to leave.

Avoiding toxic or abusive relationships also finds biblical support. While we’re called to love others, Jesus himself withdrew from hostile crowds when they sought to harm him (Luke 4:30, John 8:59). Setting boundaries with people who are manipulative, persistently destructive, or abusive is not a failure of Christian love but an exercise of healthy self-protection and wisdom.

The book of Proverbs warns against engaging with certain types of people and conversations. “*Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him*” (26:4). Titus 3:9-10 counsels avoiding foolish controversies and divisive people after appropriate warnings have been given. Not every argument deserves our engagement, and not every relationship deserves unlimited access to our lives.

Even Jesus modelled the need for withdrawal from overwhelming demands. He regularly withdrew from crowds to rest and pray (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16). Taking breaks from draining situations to preserve mental, emotional, and spiritual health isn’t weakness or selfishness—it’s sustainable discipleship. We cannot pour from an empty cup.

Discerning the Difference — The crucial distinction lies in examining what we’re avoiding and why. Are we avoiding situations that genuinely threaten our spiritual health, physical safety, or mental wellbeing? Or are we simply avoiding discomfort, emotional labour, or the needs of others?

Funerals and times of mourning fall into the latter category. They’re uncomfortable, emotionally draining, and often inconvenient. But they serve others in their most vulnerable moments. The biblical pattern consistently encourages us toward such presence, even when it costs us something. Indeed, the return rail and plane fares to Newcastle plus accommodation certainly did that.

Conversely, avoiding temptation, toxic relationships, or situations that compromise our conscience protects us and often protects others from harm. These forms of avoidance align with biblical wisdom because they preserve our capacity to love and serve effectively.

The path forward requires honest self-examination. When we feel the urge to avoid something, we must ask: is this wisdom or is this comfort-seeking? Is this protecting my wellbeing or avoiding my responsibility to others? Biblical discernment means knowing when to courageously stay and when to prudently walk away.

Know the Bible! - The First & Second Book of Maccabees (1)

(© bibleproject)



The first book of Maccabees is the exciting story of a successful rebellion of the Israelites against their Greek and Syrian oppressors that took place in the 160s B.C., also known as the Maccabean Revolt. The book was

written by an anonymous Jewish historian sometime after the revolt ended, and its title is a Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew word *maq̄qebet*, which means “hammer.” This was a nickname of one of the revolt’s leaders, Judah the Hammer, or in Greek, Judas Maccabeus.

The book was originally written in Hebrew, though it wasn’t ever considered part of the Hebrew Bible by Israel. That’s why later Jewish and Protestant traditions don’t include it in their Bible. But an old Greek translation was made, and it was widely read and valued in Greek-speaking Judaism and in many communities of the early Church. That’s why Maccabees is part of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bibles.

The book can be divided into five movements. It begins with the rise of oppressive empires in the ancient East, who subjugate the Israelites. And then that leads up to the revolt. Then the following three movements are focused on three leaders of the revolution. First Judah, then Jonathan, and finally Simon.

Dishonouring God in the Temple — The story begins with the famous Macedonian warrior king, named Alexander the Great, who took the Mediterranean world by storm. Before his death, he divided his kingdom among his lifelong friends. One of these was a family called the Seleucids, who ruled over Syria and produced a power-hungry ruler named Antiochus IV, who was bad news. Not only did he seize power over Israel, but he teamed up with certain Israelites that the author calls “renegades.” These are Jewish people who abandoned Israel’s covenant with God and began assimilating into the cultures of the surrounding nations.

Antiochus eventually came to Jerusalem himself. He pillaged the temple treasury, and he then decreed that everyone under his rule should abandon their traditional religion and family culture and conform to his. Many faithful Israelites refuse, and they are brutally killed. And we read, “*very*

great wrath came upon Israel.” At this point, a man named Mattathias enters the story with his five sons, John, Simon, Judah, Eleazar, and Jonathan. They move away from Jerusalem to a town called Modein, where they lament over the state of Israel and how Israel’s God is being dishonoured in the temple.

The revolution begins — Then officials from Antiochus come to Modein, and they extend the king’s friendship to Mattathias if he will offer a sacrifice to gods other than the God of Israel. Mattathias refuses, and he declares that he and his sons will remain faithful to their covenant with Israel’s God. But another Israelite comes and tries to offer that sacrifice. So Mattathias kills him, a lot like the zealous Phinehas in the Torah. And so the revolution begins.

They win many victories in the revolt’s early years. And the chapter concludes with an old Mattathias speaking his final words to his sons, encouraging them to remain faithful to the covenant. He appoints Judah as a commander of the revolutionary army, and he advises his sons to listen to the wisdom of Simon. Then Mattathias dies, and all Israel grieves his death.

Victory and rededication of the Temple — After this, Judah the Hammer takes charge. He’s honoured with an opening poem, where he’s described like a lion in battle, a lot like the biblical Judah was in Genesis.

Judah defeats many Syrian leaders and allies, like Apollonius of Samaria, whose sword Judah takes and uses in the rest of his battles, a lot like David did with Goliath’s sword. Antiochus is furious when he hears about the revolt’s success. So he appoints an official named Lysias to oversee Judea and put down the revolt. But Judah defeats him. And as Lysias’ army retreats, Judah takes Israel to Jerusalem where they capture the city and restore the temple. There they purify and rededicate the temple, an event celebrated annually ever since, known as Hanukkah, which in Hebrew means “dedication.”

After this come more stories of Judah’s victories over Antiochus’ armies and over some of Israel’s ancient hostile neighbours, like Edom and Ammon to the east. And the name of Judah and his brothers was honoured by all Israel and the nations around them. But when Antiochus hears that his power over Israel has been shattered by Judah, he becomes so distraught and sick that he dies. And after a battle of rivals for the throne, Antiochus IV’s son, named Antiochus V, seizes power.

He recommissions Lysias to defeat Judah’s army, leading up to the battle of Beth-Zechariah. Judah’s brother Eleazar is killed in the fierce battle by a war elephant. But Judah fights Antiochus V to a standstill. And when Antiochus sees that he cannot win, he proposes a peace treaty, and the war is over for now. *To be continued. Image: Hanukkah by Oli Solomon Sherman (1934-1988).*

The Psalms

Psalms 59: Refuge in the midst of danger

Psalm 59 gives voice to a cry for deliverance in a time of threat and hostility. It opens with a plea for rescue: “*Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God.*” The psalmist speaks as one surrounded by danger, pursued by those who seek harm without cause. The situation is urgent and personal. Yet even in the midst of fear, the psalm directs its words not towards retaliation but towards God, placing the whole burden of injustice into his hands.

The enemies in this psalm are described in vivid and unsettling images. They are compared to prowling dogs, restless and insatiable, moving through the city in search of prey. Their words are as dangerous as their actions: “*swords are in their lips.*” Violence here is not only physical but also spoken, revealing how destructive speech can wound and divide. The imagery reminds us that evil often operates both openly and subtly, through actions and through words that spread harm.

At the same time, the psalm makes a clear claim of innocence. The psalmist insists that he suffers not because of wrongdoing but despite faithfulness: “*not for my transgression, nor for my sin.*” This raises a difficult but familiar reality: that suffering does not always come as a consequence of personal fault. There are times when the righteous face hostility simply for standing in the truth. In such moments, the psalm encourages honest prayer rather than silent endurance.

God is addressed as the one who sees, who rises, and who judges. The psalm calls upon him to “*awake to visit all the heathen*” and to act as the true ruler over all nations. Earthly threats, however powerful they may appear, are placed within a larger reality in which God remains sovereign. This perspective does not deny the seriousness of danger, but it reframes it. The enemies may surround the psalmist, but they do not have the final word.

There is also a striking tension within the psalm’s prayer. On the one hand, the psalmist asks for protection and deliverance; on the other, he asks that the wicked not be swiftly destroyed, but rather brought low in a way that reveals God’s justice. “*Slay them not, lest my people forget.*” The desire is not merely for escape but for a visible demonstration that wrongdoing has consequences and that God’s rule is real. Justice, in this sense, becomes a witness to the world.

Yet alongside these strong petitions, a note of trust begins to grow. The refrain marks a turning point: “*I will wait upon thee: for God is my defence.*” The psalmist moves from fear to watchfulness, from anxiety to expectation. Waiting here is not passive resignation but active trust, a steady looking

towards God in the midst of uncertainty. It is the posture of one who refuses to be defined by the threat around him.

By the close of the psalm, this trust has become praise. “*Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.*” The danger has not necessarily disappeared, but the psalmist’s perspective has changed. God is now seen not only as a judge and protector but as a source of strength and joy. The movement from lament to praise reflects a deep confidence that God hears and responds, even when circumstances remain difficult. This transformation is at the heart of the psalm: prayer reshapes the one who prays. In turning again and again to God, the psalmist discovers a deeper stability that does not depend on outward safety. Even when surrounded by uncertainty, he is anchored in the faithfulness of God, and this assurance becomes a quiet but enduring source of peace.

Psalm 59 invites us to bring our fears, our experiences of injustice, and our vulnerability before God. It acknowledges that the world can be hostile and that evil may seem persistent. It also reminds us that we are not alone in such struggles; the prayers of Scripture give us words when our own fail. In speaking them, we are joined to a wider community of faith across time. Yet it also teaches us to wait, to trust, and ultimately to praise. In doing so, it shows that faith is not the absence of fear, but the decision to place that fear into the hands of the One who watches over us and defends us.

Questions for reflection

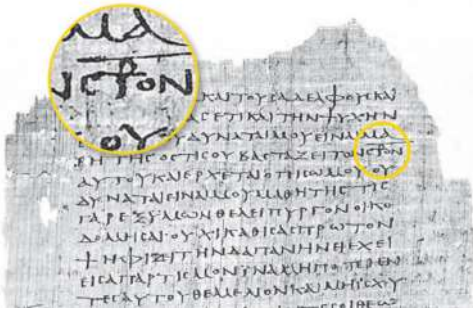
1. Where do I feel threatened or overwhelmed, and how do I bring that honestly before God?
2. How do my words affect others—do they build up or cause harm?
3. What does it mean for me to “wait upon” God in difficult circumstances?
4. How can I move from anxiety to trust, even when my situation does not immediately change?

A prayer

*O God, our refuge and strength, you see the dangers that surround us
and you know the fears within our hearts.
Deliver us from all that seeks to harm us
and guard us with your steadfast love.
Teach us to wait upon you with patience and trust,
and to lift our voices in praise even in times of uncertainty.
For you are our defence and our salvation;
in you we place our hope. Amen.*

Symbols of Early Christian Art — The Star of Jacob

Based on Prof. László Vanyó's book



The cross stands at the centre of Christian faith today, yet it did not appear immediately in the form we now recognise. In the earliest centuries, it was present first as a sign rather than as a fully developed image. Early Christians recognised cross-like forms in many places (anchor, mast) and used them quietly in worship and daily practice. The

cross was already there, but often hidden, suggested rather than clearly displayed.

One of the earliest expressions of this was the use of the *tau*. Writers such as the author of the Epistle of Barnabas saw in this simple form a sign of the cross. This connection was not only visual. It rested on biblical foundations, especially the passage in Ezekiel, where the faithful are marked on the forehead. This mark was later understood in connection with the sealing of God's servants and the naming of the elect in the Book of Revelation. In these traditions, the mark, the name of God, and the cross come together in a meaningful way.

There is also an older background which deepens this understanding. In the Old Testament, priests were anointed on the forehead in the form of a tau, while kings received a different kind of anointing. This detail helps us to see how the marking of the forehead became significant in Christian life. The sign of the cross on the forehead became one of the earliest and most widespread practices among believers. St Basil the Great later refers to it as one of the unwritten traditions handed down from the apostles themselves.

From an early time, this sign was not limited to a single moment. It appeared in baptism, where the Christian was marked as belonging to Christ, but it was also used in preparation for baptism and in other rites. Even catechumens received this mark as a sign of their commitment; sing referred to as “radiant seal”.

Gradually, the cross-sign entered more deeply into both liturgy and daily life. It accompanied prayer, the Eucharist, and acts of blessing. It was understood not only as a sign but as a protection. Christians spoke of it as a shield or weapon against evil. Stories tell of its power over demons and of its

use in sanctifying places. In this way, the cross was not only remembered but actively used and experienced.

At the same time, the cross was never treated as a mere outward gesture. It carried a deeper, even cosmic meaning. Some of the early writers saw in the cross the structure of the whole world. The Word of God, they taught, stretches across creation in every direction, and the form of the cross reveals this hidden order. In other interpretations, the vertical and horizontal beams speak of the union between the divine and the human, joined together in Christ. The visible sign thus points to an invisible reality.



The cross also came to be linked with hope for the future. Christians prayed towards the East, expecting the return of Christ, and in some traditions the cross itself was seen as a sign that would appear at his coming. This expectation influenced both prayer and art. Crosses were painted on walls, especially on the eastern side, and later placed prominently in churches. These developments show how the cross moved from a hidden sign to a visible centre of worship.

As reflection deepened, the language surrounding the cross also became richer. It was no longer seen only in terms of suffering, but also as a sign of glory and victory, brighter than the sun, as St John Chrysostom notes. He encourages believers not only to draw it outwardly but to carry it within, remembering all that it signifies: Christ's triumph, the opening of heaven, and the defeat of death.

There were also other biblical connections, such as the bronze serpent lifted up in the wilderness. Yet these did not immediately shape Christian imagery, partly because of misunderstandings in some groups. Only later were such parallels more freely used.

Over time, different forms of the cross appeared in Christian art and practice. These variations reflect not confusion but growth. What began as a hidden sign became a clearly recognised symbol. Through this gradual development, the Church came to express more fully what had always been true: that in the cross we see both the depth of suffering and the fullness of salvation. — *First image: New Testament papyrus, ca. 200 AD, where Tau is used for "cross" or "crucify". Second image: a mosaic in San Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna; ca. 549 AD.*

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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 housebound 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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