

First Sunday of Lent, 9 March 2025

“You must worship the Lord your God and serve him alone.”

What tempts us? At a simple level we talk about self-indulgence. We give up chocolates or cream cakes for Lent because we are aware of how we can become dependent on, or addicted to, such pleasures of the table. At a more serious level, items like drugs or alcohol or gambling can become lifelong dependencies which prevent us living as independent human beings with free will. Again, other behaviours can tempt us because we feel we can get away with them. We think of stealing and infidelities, cheating in a variety of ways. Again, our honesty is compromised, and we live lives of deceit, deceiving no one so much as ourselves. Then there are the temptations that play more directly with other people's lives, the temptations of power and wealth, which exploit and disregard others, yet are sometimes regarded by society with admiration or at least envy. One of the everlasting questions of history is whether there can ever be such a thing as a “benign dictator”. The answer from the last hundred years must surely be “no”. There are, no doubt, many other examples, but the list so far has probably depressed you enough. However, reflecting on where we stand in our lives is good. The list reveals how we can fail to recognise temptation for what it is. Since the time of the famous apple eaten by Adam and Eve, we have always claimed to be in the pursuit of good. What we fail to see are the side effects and consequences. Not many of us are assiduous readers of footnotes!

Jesus offers us the footnotes. The devil has done his homework. We don't know how much the devil may know of the true nature of Jesus. That is not his role. His role, as with Job in the Old Testament, is to test, to undermine the faithful of God. If God in the Old Testament provided food for his people in the wilderness, can Jesus not do the same for himself? The answer Jesus gives is not just a sharp put-down. It also shows us the message behind these three incidents. First, there is the reference to the Old Testament. God provides food for his people. Cannot Jesus do the same for himself? Jesus points out that we must not use the scriptures as a series of isolated quotes. The feeding of the people only makes sense against the background of the whole relationship between God and his people. And here comes the third element in the incident. Jesus will feed the people in a similar fashion. He will go further and offer himself as a sacrifice on their behalf and leave himself spiritually and in sacramental form. We see the same pattern in the next two temptations. The first addresses the matter of power. It is an interesting reflection that the devil considers human domination as his to grant. Jesus will reveal to his disciples in his life and death a way forward that lies in vulnerability and self-sacrifice. In the final temptation the devil turns to the scriptures to encourage Jesus into the death-defying act of plunging off the parapet of the Temple. Again, Jesus resets the context. The Old Testament is full of examples of God being tested by his people. He is happy to be tested when it relates to their salvation, but not when they want him to be there for them without doing anything on their part. Jesus will be immersed in a death-defying act, but it will not be for himself, but for the salvation of his people. A final note is that all this complex, if succinct, prologue to the Gospel takes place through the guidance and presence of the Spirit. In his Gospel and subsequent Acts of the Apostles, Luke aims to show how the Spirit is the driving force in the life of Jesus and the whole mystery of salvation.

We may think that our own temptations fall into insignificance when put alongside the challenges to Jesus as the start of his public life. As we begin our Lenten journey, they can yet help us set our own lives against that self-same mystery. Do we feed ourselves and neglect others? Are we committed to power and control rather than service? Are we also victims of the modern myth that all that matters are fame and fortune? Our answers to these questions will help us appreciate how much the Holy Spirit is also leading us through the wilderness. Our lives are expressions of the mystery of salvation. The footnotes do matter.

Parish Census Forms. We are conducting a parish census for the first time in ten years, and **we kindly request everyone to participate, whether you are currently registered with the parish or not. The old Parish Register will be deleted as its data storage does not comply with GDPR norms.** A new Parish Register will be created, so it is mandatory that you complete the census if you wish to be registered with the parish. Your input is invaluable to us. Please complete the census form by scanning this QR code (which is also available in the Narthex) or by using the provided online link. <https://forms.office.com/e/GTfhzBCTBx?origin=lpLink>



You can also find the information on the parish website - Select the 'About' tab, then 'Parish Registration.'

Your cooperation and participation are greatly appreciated.

CAFOD Lent Family Fast Day, Friday 14th March. Please donate to the Family Fast Day parish collection next weekend and be a pilgrim of hope with CAFOD this Jubilee Year. You will be supporting communities experiencing the impacts of war, poverty and climate change to find solutions and hope. Use the CAFOD envelope in the narthex, donate online at cafod.org.uk/envelope or call us on 0303 303 3030. You can also text CAFODLENT to 70085 to donate £10.

Stations of the Cross are on Fridays in Lent at 7.00 pm.

Morning Teas and Coffees. Please join us for Teas and Coffees in the Presbytery Meeting room **after 9.15 am Mass on Tuesdays and Fridays.** All are welcome.

Lenten My Day By Day booklets are available in the narthex for £ 1.00 each. Please deposit your money in the Publications Box in the wall in the narthex.

Financial Report 2024. You will find copies of the Financial Report for year end 2024 in the narthex and on the parish website (*in the Newsletter page*).

Repository. On sale are Calendars and Diaries at reduced prices; St Patrick's Day badges and cards; and a selection of cards for many occasions including Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Mass Intentions, Birthdays – all at very reasonable prices. Why not take a look and support your parish?

Signing of Certificates of Catholic Practice (CCP) for admission to St Michael's Nursery is in the presbytery on Monday, 31st March, 6.45- 7.30 pm. Please try to come at this time, rather than seeking an individual appointment.

Westminster Cathedral Choir will perform again Johann Sebastian Bach's retelling of St John's Passion **on Tuesday 18th March 2025** at 7.30pm at Westminster Cathedral. This is a wonderful chance to hear the Cathedral's superb choir performing one of the greatest pieces of Easter music ever written.

Discounted tickets are available at the following link, using the password below.

<https://www.ticketmaster.co.uk/event/1F006179F7594403?did=30off>

Click Enter Offer Code and type the code: SJP30

Lourdes Pilgrimage 25th July - 1st August 2025 – Registration for the Westminster diocesan pilgrimage led by Cardinal Vincent Nicholas is now open via the online form at <https://pilgrimages.rcdow.org.uk> or by contacting the Pilgrimage Office on 020 7798 9173. Options to travel by plane or train are available and there are many volunteering opportunities for those wishing to serve.

All applications need to be submitted **by Wednesday 30th April**.

Annual Mass of Thanksgiving for Matrimony at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, 17th May 2025, at 2:30 pm. The Cardinal invites couples in the Diocese to celebrate in 2025 their 5th, 10th, 25th, 30th, 40th, 50th, and 60th (and any year over 60) wedding anniversary of Catholic marriage. If you would like to attend, please give the following details to Shenda in the parish office **by Monday, 31st March**: husband and wife's names, wedding date, number of years married, postal address, email (or phone number, if no email).

Mass Intentions. If you wish to book a Mass, please drop your intention envelope in the offertory collection box at the back of the church or through the presbytery letterbox. *If you are able to make your Mass offering under Gift Aid, please use the new blue donation envelopes.*

Bucket Collection. The Bucket Collection is for Shooting Star Children's Hospices. The donations box is in the wall at the back of the church.

This Sunday's readings, First Sunday of Lent, 9 March 2025

Deuteronomy 26: 4-10; Romans 10; 8-13; Luke 4: 1-13

Next Sunday's readings, Second Sunday of Lent, 16 March 2025

Genesis 15: 5-12, 17-18; Philippians 3; 17 – 4: 1; Luke 9: 28b-36

Offertory Collection. Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate £581.37; Envelopes £224.00; Standing Orders £900.00

Contactless £280.66

MANNA Foodbank. This week's shortages: Cereal Bars; Instant Mashed Potato (Smash type); Crackers; Fruit Squash; Tinned Corned Beef; Small Jars of Coffee 100g; Tinned Custard; Noodles for 1; Shaving Foam/Gel; Kitchen Roll (small rolls preferably); Toilet Paper; Laundry pods/liquid/powder/capsules; Men's warm gloves (new only) for our Homeless clients; Easter Eggs/Treats (best before date of at least end of April). *Please leave your donations in the box in the narthex.*

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

During Adoration after Saturday morning Mass (and by appointment)

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

To arrange a baptism please refer to the parish website

(see: Parish Life → Sacramental Preparation → Baptism)

For the parish Mass timetable, please refer to the parish website:

<http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford>

Safeguarding If you've any concerns or require advice regarding the safety or well-being of a child or vulnerable adult, please contact our parish safeguarding rep, Tiziana Demurtas on 07778 533932 or ashfordsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk
You can also contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 020 7798 9356 or safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk

PLEASE PRAY

for all the sick and housebound in our parish.

for anniversaries in March since 2018: Winifred Atkinson, Ben Boone, Kevin Carroll, Lena Chapman, Peggy Collins, Tina Edwards, Elizabeth Floyd, Christina Hunt, Jennifer Langan, Jeremiah McMullen, Lorraine Munro, Noel O'Neill, William O'Rourke, Barbara Parker, Joan Peters, Christopher Worley.

for Fr Philip Baptiste and the parishioners of St Theodore of Canterbury, Hampton in the Upper Thames Deanery.

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness and rediscovering each other's gifts, even in their differences.

Mass Intentions 9th – 16th March

Sun 9th First Sunday of Lent

(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm	Munidasa Saparamadu RIP
	09.15am	Rejimon Thomas RIP
	11.30am	Pat McNulty RIP
	06.00pm	The people of the parish
Mon 10th	09.15am	Dr Sheila Santamaria RIP
Tues 11th	09.15am	In thanksgiving
Wed 12th	06.00pm	Francis Eastwood RIP
Fri 14th	09.15am	In thanksgiving
Sat 15th	09.15am	Peter Ng and family intentions

Sun 16th Second Sunday of Lent

(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm	Welby Cooper RIP
	09.15am	Lorraine Munro RIP
	11.30am	In thanksgiving
	06.00pm	The people of the parish

St Michael's Catholic Church

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Email: ashford@rcdow.org.uk

Website: <http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford>

This parish is part of the Westminster Catholic Diocese Trustee Charity no. 233699

**Fr Sidon Sagar FDP: Parish Priest, Fr Carlo Mazzotta FDP: Assistant Priest
Parish Secretary: Mrs Shenda Holmes**

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm