

### THE SEASON OF LENT

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** Our corporate *Stations of the Cross* will be at:

**St BERNARD'S:** Thursdays at 7.30pm, following Mass at 7.00pm.

**St GABRIEL'S:** Fridays at 10.30am, following Mass at 10.00am.

*Of course you can come to church anytime to make private Stations of the Cross in Lent, or any other time of year. Remember, the door code to St Bernard's is C8645. St Gabriel's is open during office hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am-2.30pm; Saturday from 4.30pm.*

**TODAY! (SUNDAY 12TH): ROMERO, HEARTBEAT OF EL SALVADOR:** Come and see a video of Rise Theatre's last original production, the story of the conversion and martyrdom of St Oscar Romero, in St Gabriel's hall at 1.30pm, FOLLOWED BY:

**TODAY! (SUNDAY 12TH): ROSARY FOR LENT AT 3PM AT ST GABRIEL'S:** Come to pray the Holy Rosary for peace. Our corporate Lenten Rosary.

**LENTEN ALMS:** We will be collecting Lenten Alms for the Cardinal's Lent Appeal, and once again for the Diocese of Hadiab-Irbil, in Iraq. Cardinal Vincent writes: "This year celebrates 10 years of *Caritas Westminster*, supporting both local and diocese-wide charitable concerns working with the most deprived, restoring hope and enabling people to lead a life of dignity and worth." There are many ways to give alms: see the posters in church with QR code for donations; envelopes for gift-aided offerings; a dedicated wall box in each church; collections on Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday will be for Lenten Alms.

**"BEST LENT EVER":** Visit [dynamiccatholic.com](http://dynamiccatholic.com) to sign up for daily inspirational and thought-provoking messages and videos for the keeping of Lent.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION IN LENT:** One of the Precepts of the Catholic Church - a law that helps our spiritual and moral upbuilding - is that, as the absolute minimum, we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation for any mortal sins at least once a year, so that we may be able to receive Holy Communion also at least once a year. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2042) Although this precept does not specify when, Catholics often associate it with Lent due to the penitential character of the season.

The approach that we may have with the Sacrament varies in many ways: whether it be joyful or daunting, a form of habit or challenging. Confession, however, already helps us to experience the central message of our faith: that God in Christ has redeemed us of our sinful lives by His Passion, Death, and Resurrection - transforming us into one who lives for the love of God and neighbour - the very promise we wait for in Easter. ***Renew yourself in Reconciliation this Lent.***

In our parish, we already have Reconciliation available on **Thursday evening and Saturday morning/evening**. During this season, we will also offer the opportunity to come to Confession on **Monday 6pm - 6.45pm at St Gabriel's and Wednesday: 10.30-11.15am also at St Gabriel's**. Embrace this opportunity of God's Mercy and Grace.

**SYCAMORE: A COURSE IN EXPLORING CHRISTIAN FAITH:** *How can we find happiness? What's the meaning of life? Is there a God?* These are questions that you or someone you know may be thinking about. *Sycamore* is an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. It gives you space to meet other people, share ideas, explore your beliefs, and think about questions that really matter. It can form a real sense of community, a spirit of friendship, some great conversation. **NEXT MEETING will be at St. Gabriel's Church Hall on 20 March 2023 at 7.00pm refreshments available!** All are welcome - whether a faithful parishioner of many years or someone who is starting his/her journey of faith. Meetings then will be every two weeks or so, giving five more up to the summer. Ask Fr Carlos for more information.

**"FAITHFUL COMPANIONS": RISE THEATRE** - a professional Christian theatre company will be performing their original play *"Faithful Companions"*



HERE AT ST

**GABRIEL'S PARISH HALL**

on **WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH** at 7.30pm

*"Faithful Companions"* explores the inspirational true story of Marie Madeleine d'Houët, foundress of an international Society of Catholic sisters called the Faithful Companions of Jesus ([www.fcjsisters.org](http://www.fcjsisters.org)). A story of faith, love, loss, discernment, vocation, social justice and missionary zeal. Come and experience this exciting new play for yourself, performed with energy and passion by the RISE Theatre team - visit [www.risetheatre.co.uk/faithfulcompanions](http://www.risetheatre.co.uk/faithfulcompanions) to watch the trailer.

***A great opportunity to be inspired to reflect and form our faith during Lent and to join together to see professionally trained actors performing a Christian production in your own parish.***

The performance depicts the courageous story of one woman's fight to address the great need in the world around her in 19th century France and beyond, lived through steadfast devotion to Jesus Christ and responding to God's call. It's an inspirational story of faith, love, loss, discernment, vocation, social justice & missionary zeal. Performance 75 mins without interval. Not suitable for children under 12 years old.

TICKETS £10 OR £5 FOR THOSE UNDER 18. AVAILBALE FROM THE PARISH OFFICE OR ONLINE FROM [www.ticketsource.co.uk/risetheatre](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/risetheatre)

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**SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF LENT**

Lent is a season of soul-searching, or repentance and of renewal in preparation for Easter. Lent (which in English also means "springtime") originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a time of preparation for Baptism at Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and converts were instructed in the faith before Holy Baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the desert for forty days. Lent is above all characterised as a time of prayer and penance, when Christ wants to lead us back to our baptismal promises of dying to sin and of living for God.

- **Dying to sin:** During Lent, God's people seek to put sin out of their lives by uprooting habits that are contrary to God's will. It is a time of conversion, of turning away from our sins and of turning back to God.
- **Living for God:** The Lord Jesus is calling us to be people of praise and prayer, and living signs of his love for all. During Lent we open our hearts to our Father, so that we may live with Christ for God.

What should we do in Lent? The Gospel of Ash Wednesday tells of the three traditional pillars of Lenten observance, **prayer, fasting and almsgiving.**

- **Prayer:** More serious attention - in other words renewal - in prayer during Lent should draw us closer to the Lord. We might pray especially for the grace to live out our baptismal promises more fully.
- **Fasting:** This ancient discipline is more than a means of developing self-control. It is often an aid to prayer, as the pangs of hunger remind us of our hunger for God. Fasting should also be linked to our concern for those forced to fast by poverty, those who suffer from the injustices of our economic and political structure, those in need for any reason. Thus, fasting too is linked to living out our baptismal promises.
- **Almsgiving:** This sacrificial sign of our care for those in need and of gratitude for all that God has given us. Works of charity and the promotion of justice are integral elements of the Christian way of life that begins with baptism.

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**EARTHQUAKE IN TURKEY & SYRIA:** Practical aid - i.e. financial donations - can be directed through CAFOD who will be supporting the work of church agencies on the ground. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Caritas Turkey and Caritas Syria, and you can read about their initial response here: <https://www.caritas.org/2023/02/earthquake-in-turkey-and-syria-caritas-network-launches-first-phase-of-aid/> More details visit CAFOD's Syria Turkey Emergency Appeal: at <https://cafod.org.uk/give>.

**AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED:** is also channelling disaster relief via local contacts in the church in Syria and Turkey. Visit [acnuk.org](http://acnuk.org) to help.

*Please don't hand in cash for earthquake relief. We cannot pass this on efficiently.*

**MILL HILL MISSIONARIES NATIONAL NOVENA TO ST JOSEPH:** 11-19 March. Join this annual work of prayer for missionary work. Visit [www.millhillmissionaries.com/novena](http://www.millhillmissionaries.com/novena). Info from [noveahmh@gmail.com](mailto:noveahmh@gmail.com), or tel: 01628 673178

**BACH'S St JOHN PASSION AT WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL:** As part of its Lenten devotions, Westminster Cathedral Choir will perform the St John Passion on Thursday 16th March at 7.30pm. **Buy their tickets at a discount of 50%.** The Cathedral Choir, accompanied by a period Baroque orchestra and outstanding soloists James Gilchrist and Roderick Williams, directed by the Cathedral's Master of Music, Simon Johnson. Discounted tickets are available at:

<https://www.ticketmaster.co.uk/event/1F005D88A31F16CD?did=saint50john> Please enter the password: SJP50 to obtain the discount.

**ANNUAL MASS OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY: Westminster Cathedral, Sat. 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 2:30pm.** The Cardinal is inviting to this Mass all couples in the Diocese, who are celebrating their 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> (and every year over 60) wedding anniversary of Catholic marriage in 2023. If you are celebrating an anniversary, please give the following details to the Parish Office: husband and wife's names, date and church of Catholic marriage, current full postal address and email (or telephone number, if no email). **Deadline for info. is 27 March.**

**PARISH ACCOUNTS FOR 2022:** A summary of the Parish Accounts for 2022 is posted in the foyer of each church. From this you can see the following:

- Income is up, which is good news. BUT we are not giving to the parish in the most efficient way. Please consider giving by means of a Standing Order and, if you are a tax payer, making a Gift Aid declaration.
- The amount of Gift Aid we were able to claim in 2022 was roughly the same as in 2021. This means that several thousand pounds of FREE MONEY from the government went to waste.
- Expenditure is roughly in line with what we expect. Less repair and fabric work were done in 2022, so it looks as though we have a much bigger surplus. However, fabric work will need to be done, and of course fuel/energy costs are rising dramatically in 2023.

**Thank you!** For your commitment and generosity to the parish and to other causes. Please keep under review what you are able to contribute, and if you can move away from using cash to a Standing Order, please ask for the details.

**PLANNED GIVING ENVELOPE BOXES:** We have started preparing the boxes of envelopes which start on 9 April 2023. Please let the Parish office know if you wish to change to standing order, have changed your address or no longer wish to use envelopes for your donations. Thank you.

**DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES 21-28 JULY:** Bookings are not open yet, but '*Expressions of Interest*' are sought from all who intend to participate in the Pilgrimage, whether as Praying Pilgrims, Clergy etc. An expression of interest can be made at the website: <https://rcdow.org.uk/pilgrimages/lourdes/>

**PILGRIMAGE TO ROME AND ASSISI 6-13 NOVEMBER:** Fr Tom has sent details of a pilgrimage he will be leading from Northwood parish between 6-13 November. 4 nights in Rome and 2 in Assisi. Full details on the poster in church.

**DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND 19-27 NOVEMBER:** The annual Pilgrimage to the Holy Land will take place from Sunday 19th Nov to Monday 27th Nov, led by Bishop John Sherrington and Fr John Farrell OP. It will include visits to Galilee, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Flights will be from Heathrow. Costs are £2265 per person sharing, £682 single room supplement; travel insurance essential. Booking forms are available from Tangey Tours or from Elizabeth Uwalaka in the Pilgrimage Office or at <http://www.tangey-tours.com/WHL>

**PART TIME WORK AVAILABLE AT SACRED HEART COLLEGE:** The school is currently looking to appoint exam invigilators to work during internal and external exams. Full details on poster in the foyer of the churches.

**LATEST NEWS FROM GOOD COUNSEL NETWORK: Isabel Vaughan Spruce - Arrested for silently praying outside a closed Abortion Centre.** Come to hear her speak at 7pm Monday 13th Feb. and learn about the Life-Saving Peaceful Prayerful Outreach that is **40 Days for Life** as we prepare for a 40 Days for Life Campaign in Brixton. For more details contact Gabriella on 07745-711064 or The Good Counsel Network on 020-7723-1740. Venue: Parish Hall, Our Lady of the Rosary, 364 Brixton Road, London, SW9 0TH.

**COST OF LIVING CRISIS:** News about the Warm Spaces in the Westminster Diocese (which, going by today's weather, could be needed for a little while to come) has crossed the Atlantic! If you have a few minutes, take a look at this news video, featuring Fr Richard Nesbit from White City: [CBS "Warm banks" open doors to people struggling to stay warm in U.K. - YouTube](#)

For anyone struggling with fuel bills, this might be useful - Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis has created a handy tool for anyone who would like to calculate their likely energy bills from April 1<sup>st</sup>:

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/what-are-the-price-cap-unit-rates-/#epgcalculator](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/what-are-the-price-cap-unit-rates-/#epgcalculator)

**GOOD COUNSEL NETWORK CAMPAIGN INFO:** GCN have sent their 2022 Review (copy on the noticeboard at St Bernard, which amongst other things lists the names of lives saved with your support during the last year. GCN writes: *“Please also pray that the plans to introduce national buffer zones around abortion centres in the UK will not come to pass. In GK Chesterton’s epic poem, The Ballad of the White Horse, Our Lady tells King Alfred, “I tell you naught for your comfort, Yea, naught for your desire, Save that the sky grows darker yet And the sea rises higher.” Things may seem very dark indeed and the tide seems to rise higher but it is Christmas, and this is a season of hope. We do have a reason to hope. And the children that will celebrate their first Christmas this year because of your support, are a witness to this hope and this Christian joy!* To be a regular supporter or get involved in peaceful prayer vigils, write to [info@goodcounselnetwork.com](mailto:info@goodcounselnetwork.com).

“There have now been over ten **million abortions** in Great Britain since the Abortion Act was passed 55 years ago, in October 1967. With this terrible number of lives lost, please pray and fast for the end of abortion in this country. GCN have sent a link to an article about the 10 million abortions that have taken place in Britain since the Abortion Act was passed on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1967. Also see what you can do to help end abortion. Please also share the article, <https://mariastopsabortion.blogspot.com/>. There are cards in the foyer to help you get involved.

**COLD WEATHER:** Whilst the extremely cold weather persists, remember that the underfloor heating at St Gabriel’s means that the church is warm at all times and open Monday - Friday 09.30am-2.30pm.

[The following link is offered by the organization “Warm Welcome” to locate other warm spaces:](https://www.warmwelcome.uk/#find-a-space)

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**ESCORTED PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK SHRINE, IRELAND:** 15th May 2023. £699.00 per person sharing. Price includes flight, all transfers, 4 nights’ in Knock House Hotel with full board. All entertainment and excursions included. Day trips to Westport, Ballintubber Abbey, Croagh Patrick, Fr. Peyton Centre & National Museum. Single supplement £150.00. Contact Patricia on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email [knockpilgrimages@gmail.com](mailto:knockpilgrimages@gmail.com). See poster in church.

**CONTACTLESS MACHINES:** We, like other parishes have been experiencing problems with the contactless payment consoles. We have made a little progress with determining the problems, but not yet as far as getting a solution. *Thank you for your patience.*

*Thank you to everyone for your commitment and generosity in hard and uncertain times.*

**CALLING ALL SINGERS/MUSICIANS! MUSIC FOR SUNDAY MASS:** During August there’s less music at Sunday Mass. That reminds us how important music is to our worship and how, like anything valuable, it needs to be constantly renewed and developed. For the foreseeable future our Sunday Mass schedule is remaining as it is now, and we want to build up the music especially at 9am, 10am and 11am Mass. A GREAT WAY TO OFFER A MINISTRY TO YOUR PARISH IS TO COME AND JOIN THE SINGERS TO LEAD MUSIC AT THESE MASSES. Speak with the clergy or with Simon (Director of Music) if you can offer your talent in this way...and don’t be shy!

**CARITAS WESTMINSTER:** The umbrella department for all social outreach have written to share a film that was produced to show the impact of our social justice work across the Diocese. It is a celebration of what we have achieved together across the Diocese. Here is a link to the film: <https://youtu.be/Vgxvakd-8Ug>

**CARITAS HOMES FOR UKRAINE MATCHING SERVICE:** See the poster in church. Caritas, in partnership with St John of God Hospitaller Services have launched a service to bring together displaced Ukrainians with those in the Catholic community willing to host them for 6 months. If you have room in your home in these difficult times to consider welcoming a stranger displaced by the evil war, visit <https://sjog-homesforukraine.uk/> for information.

**YOUNG CATHOLICS (AGE 18-35 YEARS):** Keep in touch with the Youth Ministry website at [www.dowym.com](http://www.dowym.com) for many resources. Particularly now “Words of advice for Catholic Young Professionals”.

**NEWS FROM “RETRouvaille”:** A Programme for Couples Struggling in their Marriages: Help Your Marriage – Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue ... or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. It brings a positive focus, new hope and helps nourish and grow your marriage. Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending and using the tools provided. The programme helps spouses uncover or re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together. It helps them through difficult times whether they are disillusioned or in deep misery. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential information about ‘Retrouvaille’ or to register for the next programme commencing with



a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 24 - 26 February 2023, or a Virtual weekend on 6 - 9 July 2023, call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443 or email [retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com](mailto:retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com) - or visit [www.retrouvaille.org.uk](http://www.retrouvaille.org.uk)

**FOR THE ATTENTION OF NEW STUDENTS IN LONDON THIS YEAR:** Based at Newman House, Gower Street, the Catholic chaplaincy also has campus-based chaplains at many of the universities and colleges. For any students other than freshers there is also an opportunity to live in at Newman House, a catered lodging with attractive rates and its own chapel. The application form is available on the Chaplaincy website [www.universitycatholic.net](http://www.universitycatholic.net). *Families whose young people are going off to college elsewhere, encourage them to find the Catholic Chaplaincy. We can help with contact details. University and college chaplaincies are important parts of the mission of the Church.*

**HELP EMERGENCY APPEAL FOR UKRAINE:** The Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London and community organisations have united to work with accredited and registered Ukrainian charities to provide medicines, food and critical services to support the most vulnerable to overcome the consequences and trauma of war. Donations can be made by cheque (payable to AUGB LTD - Central Appeal Fund and sent to Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London, Chancery Office, 21-22 Binney Street, London W1K 5BQ), directly to the central appeal fund (AUGB Ltd, Account Number: 80038237, Sortcode: 20-65-89, with reference HelpUkraine) or online: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/helpukraine>. Alternately, donations can also be made to Cafod, who are a member of the Disasters Emergency Committee at <https://cafod.org.uk/News/Emergencies-news/Ukraine-crisis>. There's a poster in the foyer with a QR code and the above details, or just put cash in an envelope marked "Ukraine" and it will be forwarded.

**NEWS FROM CARITAS WESTMINSTER: POVERTY CHALLENGE - SEE, JUDGE, ACT:** Following the Pandemic many households face new hardships as prices rise. Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) the Catholic agency addressing poverty and injustice in England and Wales has released a new booklet to increase awareness of Catholic Social Teaching on poverty. This can be downloaded at [www.csan.org.uk](http://www.csan.org.uk)

**COST OF LIVING HUB:** The Mayor of London has launched a new Cost of Living Hub to help people access information, support and advice about claiming benefits, dealing with debts, financial management and mental health support. Visit <https://www.london.gov.uk/cost-living-hub>

**GRANTS TO HELP WITH ENERGY DEBTS:** Possible help from a charitable trust plus links to other advice providers at <https://fuelpovertysource.org.uk/focus-on/fuel-debt-and-trust-funds/>

**THE CATHOLIC NETWORK:** See the poster in church advertising this free digital on-line service, a point of contact and interaction for Catholics seeking to interpret the world we live in. Each week the network welcomes guests, commentaries, reflections and instruction, as well as news items about work being done by Catholic organisations. More information at [www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk](http://www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk).

**INTRODUCING CATHOLIC LISTENERS:** Catholic Listeners; Diocese of Westminster, a new confidential listening helpline launching this month, has been set up for those who are returning to the faith. The number is 0800 448 0704. This service is based on the Landings ethos of compassionate listening. Although not a counselling service, they have a professional team trained on signposting to other services and agencies. They aim to help those in need of a safe space to talk. For further information please contact Ade at [Catholiclisteners@gmail.com](mailto:Catholiclisteners@gmail.com)

**BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON SUNDAY & HOLY DAY OBLIGATION:** The bishops of England and Wales have issued a new statement about the obligation of Sunday Mass for those who wish to be practising Catholics. The text is available in the foyer and on the parish and diocesan websites. In essence they say: *"We therefore believe that the reasons which have prevented Catholics from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation no longer apply"*. The statement is called an "Invitation" for all to be putting Sunday and Holy Day worship in first place as of Pentecost Sunday. If you have any questions or queries about this please ask one of the clerics. Also available in the foyer is Fr James' digest of the previous statements by the bishops, called *"Sunday - It is our day."*

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION IN OUR PARISH:** As we emerge from the Covid period to a new reality, so too our approach to preparation for the sacraments needs to change. We don't have an official line on this in our diocese as yet, but Cardinal Grech, Chair of the European Conference of Bishops, memorably said in 2020 that if after Covid the Church went back to doing what we did before it would be suicide!

There are some radical new ways of thinking on this unfolding in some parishes around the UK as we wait for the bishops to take a lead. We will be a little less radical.

As Parish Priest I ask families and candidates not to come with particular expectations or sense of entitlement to what should happen when: candidates should come to the sacraments when they are ready, and the first step to being ready is that habitual Sunday worship in line with the "Obligation" should be the *established* norm for the families of small children - and the children be part of this - or chosen personally by those of teenage years and above. After that, we can start to look at the base on which to build. If you have any questions or observations, contact Fr James. (Notice issued March 2022)

*(Copies of the bishops statement on Sunday and Holy Day worship of May 2022, and Fr James' digest of the previous statements by the bishops are available in the foyers of our churches and on the website. This will help to give context to the above.)*



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**Support our parish.**

You can make a donation to the parish by scanning the QR code or making a card payment on the card machine at the entrance of both of our churches.