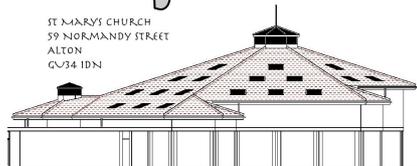


St Mary's Parish Newsletter



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MASS TIMES & INTENTIONS

w/c Sunday 22nd February, 2026

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

(A2) (Psalter Week 1)

Saturday	Saturday after Ash Wednesday
	4.45pm Stations of the Cross
	5.30pm In Thanksgiving (IRG)
Sunday	1st Sunday of Lent
<i>St. Lucy's</i>	9.00am The People of The Parish
<i>St. Mary's</i>	11.00am Michael Gordon Jones, RIP (LJ)
Monday	St. Polycarp
	9.30am John McGinty, RIP (MMcG)
Tuesday	Lent Feria
	NO MASS
Wednesday	Lent Feria
	9.30am Int of Gillian Barbara Livie (KS)
Thursday	Lent Feria
	9.30am Charles Toal, RIP (MD)
Friday	Lent Feria
	9.30am Lenten Fast Day
	9.30am Special Intention (RG)
Saturday	Lent Feria
	4.45pm Stations of the Cross
	5.30pm Fiona Kent, RIP (MMcN)
Sunday	2nd Sunday of Lent
<i>St. Lucy's</i>	9.00am The People of The Parish
<i>St. Mary's</i>	11.00am
Confessions: Saturday at 3.20pm and by appointment	

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Entrance Antiphon

When he calls on me, I will answer him; I will deliver him and give him glory, I will grant him length of days.

First Reading: Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Responsorial Psalm

Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19

Gospel Acclamation

Glory and praise to you, O Christ. One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. Glory and praise to you, O Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Communion Antiphon

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

We have received a very warm letter of thanks from Fr. Stephen of the Kiltegan Father's, There is a copy of the letter in the Church Porch.

World Day of Prayer

Friday, 6th March, 2pm Alton Methodists Church All Welcome



1st Sunday of Lent 22nd February, 2026

In the Cycle of Sunday Readings, the oldest are those of Year A in Lent – these Gospels have accompanied the Church for many centuries. We must realise why: Lent was originally the time of immediate preparation of candidates for Baptism at Easter (something which has been reintroduced to the Church by RCIA): all those already baptised used it as a time to

prepare for the renewal of Baptismal promises. This is why so much of the Scripture in Lent is about Baptism, New Life and Salvation. What is the new life of Baptism? What are we set free from? What is sin? We begin Lent by hearing about sin and temptation; the Gospel today will tell us of Jesus' own temptations, something he shares with us, though he did not sin. The other Scripture readings prepare us for the Gospel, in which Jesus, the new Adam, triumphs over temptation.

'Jesus fasts for forty days and is tempted..'

A Pope's Reflection - Pope Benedict

This is the First Sunday of Lent, the liturgical Season of 40 days which constitutes a spiritual journey in the Church of preparation for Easter. Essentially it is a matter of following Jesus who is walking with determination towards the Cross, the culmination of his mission of salvation. If we ask ourselves: "Why Lent? Why the Cross?", the answer in radical terms is this: because evil exists, indeed sin, which according to the Scriptures is the profound cause of all evil. However this affirmation is far from being taken for granted and the very word "sin" is not accepted by many because it implies a religious vision of the world and of the human being. In fact it is true: if God is eliminated from the world's horizon, one cannot speak of sin. As when the sun is hidden, shadows disappear. Shadows only appear if the sun is out; hence the eclipse of God necessarily entails the eclipse of sin. Therefore the sense of sin — which is something different from the "sense of guilt" as psychology understands it — is acquired by rediscovering the sense of God. This is expressed by the Miserere Psalm, attributed to King David on the occasion of his double sin of adultery and homicide: "Against you", David says, addressing God, "against you alone have I sinned" (Ps 51 (50):6). In the face of moral evil God's attitude is to oppose sin and to save the sinner. God does not tolerate evil because he is Love, Justice and Fidelity; and for this very reason he does not desire the death of the sinner but wants the sinner to convert and to live. To save humanity God intervenes: we see him throughout the history of the Jewish people, beginning with the liberation from Egypt. God is determined to deliver his children from slavery in order to lead them to freedom. And the most serious and profound slavery is precisely that of sin. For this reason God sent his Son into the world: to set men and women free from the domination of Satan, "the origin and cause of every sin". God sent him in our mortal flesh so that he might become a victim of expiation, dying for us on the Cross. The Devil opposed this definitive and universal plan of salvation with all his might, as is shown in particular in the Gospel of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness which is proclaimed every year on the First Sunday of Lent. In fact, entering this liturgical season means continuously taking Christ's side against sin, facing — both as individuals and as Church — the spiritual fight against the spirit of evil each time. Let us therefore invoke the maternal help of Mary Most Holy for the Lenten journey that has just begun, so that it may be rich in fruits of conversion.

CAFOD—Family Fast Day Lenten Collection

Will be taken in the second collection after all Masses on Saturday, 28th February and Sunday, 1st March.

Alton Foodbank—collection 28th Feb & 1st March

Items required please: Pasta, Tinned tomatoes, vegetables, meats fish, spreads i.e. Jam, peanut butter etc.

Thank you for your continues support and generous donations

Saints of the Week

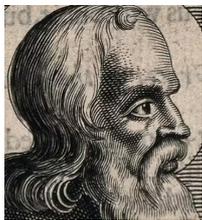
24th February, Blessed Luke Belludi

In 1220, Saint Anthony was preaching conversion to the inhabitants of Padua when a young nobleman, Blessed Luke Belludi, came up to him and humbly asked to receive the habit of the followers of Saint Francis. Anthony liked the talented, well-educated Luke and personally recommended him to Francis, who then received him into the Franciscan Order. Luke, then only 20, was to be Anthony's companion in his travels and in his preaching, tending to him in his last days and taking Anthony's place upon his death. He was appointed guardian of the Friars Minor in the city of Padua. In 1239, the city fell into the hands of its enemies. Nobles were put to death, the mayor and council were banished, the great university of Padua gradually closed and the church dedicated to Saint Anthony was left unfinished. Luke himself was expelled from the city but secretly returned. At night he and the new guardian would visit the tomb of Saint Anthony in the unfinished shrine to pray for his help. One night a voice came from the tomb assuring them that the city would soon be delivered from its evil tyrant. After the fulfillment of the prophetic message, Blessed Luke was elected provincial minister and furthered the completion of the great basilica in honor of Anthony, his teacher. He founded many convents of the order and had, as Anthony, the gift of miracles. Upon his death he was laid to rest in the basilica that he had helped finish and has had a continual veneration up to the present time. **Reflection:** The epistles refer several times to a man named Luke as Paul's trusted companion on his missionary journeys. Perhaps every great preacher needs a Luke; Anthony surely did. Blessed Luke Belludi not only accompanied Anthony on his travels, he also cared for the great saint in his final illness and carried on Anthony's mission after the saint's death. Yes, every preacher needs a Luke, someone to offer support and reassurance—including those who minister to us. We don't even have to change our names!



February 23rd, St Polycarp

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, disciple of Saint John the [Apostle](#) and friend of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, was a revered Christian leader during the first half of the 2nd century. Saint Ignatius, on his way to Rome to be martyred, visited Saint Polycarp at Smyrna, and later at Troas wrote him a personal letter. The Asia Minor Churches recognized Polycarp's leadership by choosing him as a representative to discuss with Pope Anicetus the date of the Easter celebration in Rome—a major controversy in the early Church. Only one of the many letters written by St Polycarp has been preserved, the one he wrote to the Church of Philippi in Macedonia. At 86, Polycarp was led into the crowded Smyrna stadium to be burned alive. The flames did not harm him and he was finally killed by a dagger. The centurion ordered the saint's body burned. The "Acts" of Saint Polycarp's martyrdom are the earliest preserved, fully reliable account of a Christian martyr's death. He died in 155. **Reflection:** Polycarp was recognized as a Christian leader by all Asia Minor Christians—a strong fortress of faith and loyalty to Jesus Christ. His own strength emerged from his trust in God, even when events contradicted this trust. Living among pagans and under a government opposed to the new religion, he led and fed his flock. Like the Good Shepherd, he laid down his life for his sheep and kept them from more persecution in Smyrna. He summarized his trust in God just before he died: "Father... I bless Thee, for having made me worthy of the day and the hour..." (*Acts of Martyrdom*, Chapter 14).



The Holy Father's Intentions (February)

For children with incurable diseases

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

WITH THE LORD THERE IS MERCY AND FULLNESS OF REDEMPTION

This month the Holy Father asks us to pray for children with incurable diseases.

Lord Jesus, who welcomed the little ones in your arms and blessed them tenderly, today we bring before you the children living with incurable illnesses.

Their fragile bodies are a sign of your presence, and their smiles, even in the midst of pain, are a testimony of your Kingdom.

We ask you, Lord, that they may never lack proper medical care, human and compassionate attention, and the support of a community that accompanies them with love.

Sustain their families in hope, in the midst of weariness and uncertainty, and make of them witnesses of a faith that grows stronger through trial.

Bless the hands of doctors, nurses, and caregivers, so that their work may always be an expression of active compassion.

May your Spirit enlighten them in every difficult decision, and grant them patience and tenderness to serve with dignity. Lord, teach us to recognize your face in every suffering child.

May their vulnerability awaken our compassion, and move us to care, accompany, and love with concrete gestures of solidarity.

Make of us a Church that, animated by the feelings of your Heart and moved by prayer and service, knows how to uphold fragility,

and in the midst of suffering, becomes a source of comfort, a seed of hope, and a proclamation of new life. Amen.

What does "entering Lent" mean?

It means we enter a season of special commitment in the spiritual battle to oppose the evil present in the world, in each one of us and around us. It means not off-loading the problem of evil onto others, onto society or onto God but rather recognising one's own responsibility and assuming it with awareness. In this regard Jesus' invitation to each one of us Christians to take up our "cross" and follow him with humility and trust is particularly pressing. Although the "cross" may be heavy it is not synonymous with misfortune, with disgrace, to be avoided on all accounts; rather it is an opportunity to follow Jesus and thereby to acquire strength in the fight against sin and evil.

PRAYER OF SURRENDER

Lord Jesus Christ, take all my freedom, my understanding, and my will.

All that I have and cherish you have given to me.

I surrender it all to be guided by your will.

Your love and your grace are wealth enough for me. Give me these, Lord Jesus, and I ask for nothing more. Amen.

S	P	I	R	Y	P	A	H	A	E	HAPPY	POOR	SPIRIT
E	L	H	P	S	E	A	R	H	T	HEAVEN	GENTLE	EARTH
N	R	U	O	M	P	O	O	R	R	MOURN	HUNGER	MERCIFUL
G	R	N	F	P	O	I	R	D	E	PURE	HEART	REWARD
E	T	G	Y	I	H	E	R	R	T			
N	N	E	P	E	C	A	C	I	H			
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L	G	V	O	E	A	T	E	S	A			
E	E	T	R	A	E	H	M	M	E			
N	H	U	N	G	R	E	R	E	R			

Please remember in your prayers

Baby Polly Phillips, Matthew & Duncan Graham, John D., Sr. Joan Henry; Mary McGinty, Maria Proli, Francesca Adams, Mary McGrath, Annie Tomlinson, Rita Rawling, Kate Cradock, Alex Smith, Jonathan & Lindy Wiltshire, Simon Wilder, Mary Sturgess, Theresa Davies, Flavia Stampa Gruss, Kay Hulbert, Pam Barbour

