



Our Lady and St Gerard's Lostock Hall

NEWS AND VIEWS

MARCH

We are still in Lent until the end of March but towards the end of the month we prepare not only for Easter itself but the Clocks going forward to mark the end of the long Winter months.

The times of the Easter Services will be in the Weekly Bulletin nearer the time.

How do you prepare spiritually for Easter?

Preparing Our Hearts for Easter

- Reflect on Christ's sacrifice for our sin.
- Identify our sins.
- Ask for forgiveness and repent.
- Give thanks for your new heart.
- Spend time in Scripture.
- Practice compassion.
- Spend time with others who are truly following Christ.

Issue No 674 March 2024



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Message of the Holy Father Francis for Lent 2024

Through the Desert God Leads us to Freedom

Dear brothers and sisters!

When our God reveals himself, his message is always one of freedom: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (*Ex 20:2*). These are the first words of the Decalogue given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Those who heard them were quite familiar with the exodus of which God spoke: the experience of their bondage still weighed heavily upon them. In the desert, they received the “Ten Words” as a thoroughfare to freedom. We call them “commandments”, in order to emphasize the strength of the love by which God shapes his people. The call to freedom is a demanding one. It is not answered straightaway; it has to mature as part of a journey. Just as Israel in the desert still clung to Egypt – often longing for the past and grumbling against the Lord and Moses – today too, God’s people can cling to an oppressive bondage that it is called to leave behind. We realize how true this is at those moments when we feel hopeless, wandering through life like a desert and lacking a promised land as our destination. Lent is the season of grace in which the desert can become once more – in the words of the prophet Hosea – the place of our first love (cf. *Hos 2:16-17*). *God shapes his people, he enables us to leave our slavery behind* and experience a Passover from death to life. Like a bridegroom, the Lord draws us once more to himself, whispering words of love to our hearts.

The exodus from slavery to freedom is no abstract journey. If our celebration of Lent is to be concrete, the first step is to desire to *open our eyes to reality*. When the Lord calls out to Moses from the burning bush, he immediately shows that he is a God who sees and, above all, hears: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (*Ex 3:7-8*). Today too, the cry of so many of our oppressed brothers and sisters rises to heaven. Let us ask ourselves: Do we hear that cry? Does it trouble us? Does it move us? All too many things keep us apart from each other, denying the fraternity that, from the beginning, binds us to one another.

During my visit to Lampedusa, as a way of countering the globalization of indifference, I asked two questions, which have become more and more pressing: “Where are you?” (*Gen 3:9*) and “Where is your brother?” (*Gen 4:9*). Our Lenten journey will be concrete if, by listening once more to those two questions, we realize that even today we remain under the rule of Pharaoh. A rule that makes us weary and indifferent. A model of growth that divides and robs us of a future. Earth, air and water are polluted, but so are our souls. True, Baptism has begun our process of liberation, yet there remains in us an inexplicable longing for slavery. A kind of attraction to the security of familiar things, to the detriment of our freedom.

In the Exodus account, there is a significant detail: it is God who sees, is moved and brings freedom; Israel does not ask for this. Pharaoh stifles dreams, blocks the view of heaven, makes it appear that this world, in which human dignity is trampled upon and authentic bonds are denied, can never change. He put everything in bondage to himself. Let us ask: Do I want a new world? Am I ready to leave behind my compromises with the old? The witness of many of my brother bishops and a great number of those who work for peace and justice has increasingly convinced me that we need to combat a deficit of hope that stifles dreams and the silent cry that reaches to heaven and moves the heart of God. This “deficit of hope” is not unlike the nostalgia for slavery that paralyzed Israel in the desert and prevented it from moving forward. An exodus can be interrupted: how else can we explain the fact that humanity has arrived at the threshold of universal fraternity and at levels of scientific, technical, cultural, and juridical development capable of guaranteeing dignity to all, yet gropes about in the darkness of inequality and conflict.

God has not grown weary of us. Let us welcome Lent as the great season in which he reminds us: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (*Ex 20:2*). Lent is *a season of conversion, a time of freedom*. Jesus himself, as we recall each year on the first Sunday of Lent, was driven into the desert by the Spirit in order to be tempted in freedom. For forty days, he will stand before us and with us: the incarnate Son. Unlike Pharaoh, God does not want subjects, but sons and daughters. The desert is the place where our freedom can mature in a personal decision not to fall back into slavery. In Lent, we find new criteria of justice and a community with which we can press forward on a road not yet taken.

This, however, entails a *struggle*, as the book of Exodus and the temptations of Jesus in the desert make clear to us. The voice of God, who says, “You are my Son, the Beloved” (*Mk* 1:11), and “You shall have no other gods before me” (*Ex* 20:3) is opposed by the enemy and his lies. Even more to be feared than Pharaoh are the idols that we set up for ourselves; we can consider them as his voice speaking within us. To be all-powerful, to be looked up to by all, to domineer over others: every human being is aware of how deeply seductive that lie can be. It is a road well-travelled. We can become attached to money, to certain projects, ideas or goals, to our position, to a tradition, even to certain individuals. Instead of making us move forward, they paralyze us. Instead of encounter, they create conflict. Yet there is also a new humanity, a people of the little ones and of the humble who have not yielded to the allure of the lie. Whereas those who serve idols become like them, mute, blind, deaf and immobile (cf. *Ps* 114:4), the poor of spirit are open and ready: a silent force of good that heals and sustains the world.

It is time to act, and in Lent, *to act also means to pause*. To pause *in prayer*, in order to receive the word of God, to pause like the Samaritan *in the presence of a wounded brother or sister*. Love of God and love of neighbour are one love. Not to have other gods is to pause in the presence of God beside the flesh of our neighbour. For this reason, prayer, almsgiving and fasting are not three unrelated acts, but a single movement of openness and self-emptying, in which we cast out the idols that weigh us down, the attachments that imprison us. Then the atrophied and isolated heart will revive. Slow down, then, and pause! The contemplative dimension of life that Lent helps us to rediscover will release new energies. In the presence of God, we become brothers and sisters, more sensitive to one another: in place of threats and enemies, we discover companions and fellow travellers. This is God’s dream, the promised land to which we journey once we have left our slavery behind.

The Church’s synodal form, which in these years we are rediscovering and cultivating, suggests that Lent is also a *time of communitarian decisions*, of decisions, small and large, that are counter current. Decisions capable of altering the daily lives of individuals and entire neighbourhoods, such as the ways we acquire goods, care for creation, and strive to include those who go unseen or are looked down upon. I invite every Christian community to do just this: to offer its members moments set aside to rethink their lifestyles, times to examine their presence in society and the contribution they

make to its betterment. Woe to us if our Christian penance were to resemble the kind of penance that so dismayed Jesus. To us too, he says: “Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting” (*Mt 6:16*). Instead, let others see joyful faces, catch the scent of freedom and experience the love that makes all things new, beginning with the smallest and those nearest to us. This can happen in every one of our Christian communities.

To the extent that this Lent becomes a time of conversion, an anxious humanity will notice a burst of creativity, a flash of new hope. Allow me to repeat what I told the young people whom I met in Lisbon last summer: “Keep seeking and be ready to take risks. At this moment in time, we face enormous risks; we hear the painful plea of so many people. Indeed, we are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal. Yet let us find the courage to see our world, not as being in its death throes but in a process of giving birth, not at the end but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history. We need courage to think like this” (*Address to University Students*, 3 August 2023). Such is the courage of conversion, born of coming up from slavery. For faith and charity take hope, this small child, by the hand. They teach her to walk, and at the same time, she leads them forward.^[1]
I bless all of you and your Lenten journey.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 3 December 2023, First Sunday of Advent.

FRANCIS

Marriage Preparation

Before any couple can be married in Salford diocese they have to obtain a certificate to confirm they’ve attended a marriage preparation course. Marriage Care run these courses over a day, and the next one near here will be held at Holy Souls church hall in Blackburn on Saturday March 9th. Three parishioners from Our Lady and St Gerard’s will be facilitating this particular course.

If you, or anyone you know, are thinking of getting married in church over the next year please consider attending one of these days. Obviously there is a fee for but if any couple is unable to pay the full amount alternative arrangements can be explored by e-mailing: appointments@marriagecare.org.uk.

Baptisms at St Mary's and St Gerard's church:

You may have read the notice on the weekly bulletin regarding the procedure for requesting baptism.

We are trying to simplify matters by working as a 'linked' parish team so that parents requesting baptisms for their children at either church know well in advance what the procedure entails and what dates are available for the preparation, the presentation in church and the baptisms.

Baptisms will usually take place on the first and third Sundays of the month at St Gerard's and the second and fourth Sundays of the month at St Mary's.

Initial enquiries can be made by telephoning the parish secretary who will then direct you to one of the baptism team available at both churches at weekend masses. They will provide you with an enrolment form, a letter outlining the programme and a "Welcome to our parish community' card. This card, requested by the Bishop of Salford, is to be filled in whenever you attend one of six masses. It is not intended to make life difficult for parents but just to help you familiarise yourselves and your little ones with the church, the mass and the parish community into which your child is to be baptised and welcomed.

Courses will take place approximately every two months. Further details can be obtained from Fr Mark, Fr Colin, Anna the parish secretary, or anyone on the baptism team.

Preston Guild 1992

It was early September 1992 and the week of Preston Guild had arrived. It had been twenty years since the last one. This was to be an amazing, exciting, unique and special week. For people unfamiliar with Preston this was an ancient custom as there had been a guild fair in the town since 1179!

In 1992 the schools had been given time off to celebrate. The town, and it was still a town in 1992, was ready. But, were St Gerard's and St James' ready? The two neighbouring parishes had worked together to plan the decorating of the float, the props and the costumes and the theme was CAFOD.

Both adults and children joined together to get the float ready. It was parked behind church by the grotto. The costumes were varied, from national dress to medical professionals, engineers, priests and lay people wearing CAFOD T-shirts.

When completed, and bedecked with flags, the float left Lostock Hall and headed for the town centre. All the participants gathered on a large car park on Adelphi Street, which now contains buildings belonging to UCLAN. What a thrill when Our Lady and St Gerard's and St James' were called to join the procession! All the hard work was over and now it was time to have fun! The Churches Procession moved slowly through our town with packed crowds on the pavements. For old and young it was a fantastic day and remains an amazing memory!

There will be more photos of varied events in News and Views in the coming months!

Ann Burke



Praying with Love

Women's World Day of Prayer this year is Friday 1st March,

The theme is- *"I beg you, bear with one another in love"*.

This year the theme was written by the Christian women of Palestine, and they are calling on us to connect with the land from where Jesus came, where he was born, ministered and died – and from where our faith is rooted.

Despite living in an area of the world where there is ongoing conflict and the future uncertain, the women of Palestine are sharing with love a reminder that they are there, and they want to give hope to everyone.

In the words of Maya Angelou,
"Women understand the problems of the nation better than men, for women have solved the problems of human life from embryo to birth and from birth to maturity, women are the survival kit of the human race".

This brings me to International Women's Day, the week after on the 8th March. John's birthday is the day before, so he always asks me *"When is international men's Day?"* "I am sure there will be an answer somewhere!

I am all for women achieving their rightful place in the world and I am sure I would have been marching with the suffragettes in their day, but things have changed, and women seem to have their rightful place in the world. I don't feel the need to go on hunger strike, march or chain myself to the railings.

These days I am more for home comforts, "With age comes wisdom!"

And don't worry gents, you will have your day,

And women remember *"All men are made for each other, therefore teach them better or bear with them patiently, but if you do teach them, do so gently with diplomacy and love"*.

Marcus Aurelius.

Grace Robinson.

CARITAS

Many, many thanks to all who gave to the January appeal for Caritas. This raised over five hundred pounds, a wonderful amount for our local Salford charity.

CAFOD

Easter is early this year and so our Lenten family fast day also came early. This meant that the Caritas appeal was followed swiftly by the CAFOD appeal for James, a fisherman from a small village in Liberia where unbelievably over 5 fishermen a month die because they haven't the basic safety equipment necessary to fish safely. CAFOD have now stepped in to assist these Liberian fishermen.

James' moving story can be found on the website: Cafod.org.uk. If you click on the 'Discover James' Story' link and scroll down to the heading 'When the storm comes, it empowers the ocean' you will find a 5 minute video showing how Cafod have helped make his life and the lives of his fellow fishermen much safer.

We are constantly reminded that Lent is a time for prayer, fasting and alms giving and Pope Francis has designated 2024 a special year of prayer in preparation for the Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025.

CAFOD have prepared Lenten prayer cards which can be ordered free from their website and below is one of their lovely prayers echoing James' story and the story of many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world less fortunate than ourselves. May we join together in prayer as we look to the future Jubilee Year of Hope:

Come, follow me

Loving God, when our boat is rocked by poverty, illness or disaster,
You quiet the waves, and lead us safely to shore.

When we work hard,
but still go hungry,
you walk beside us,
calling 'cast out your nets'
there is enough for all.

Lead us Lord, to play our part
in calming the storm
and sharing your gifts
so all people
may look to the future with Hope.
Amen.

If for any reason you are unable to give to CAFOD at this time, Michael and I are taking part in their Lenten fundraising challenge and are walking 200 kms over the 40 days of Lent. Our sponsorship page will be open until Pentecost and the link is:

<https://walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/cafods-big-lent-walk-michael-and-margaret>.

Any contributions would be most gratefully received.

David Gorman at St Mary's Bamber Bridge is also taking part in this challenge. On Saturday March 9th there will be a short walk 2.5 or 5 km beginning at St Mary's at 10.30 am for both parishes to raise funds for CAFOD. See the notice at the back of church. Afterwards there will be tea and toast!

Margaret Cronin

Weather or Not

Coming out of church recently. The full force of storm Joselyn (so I'm led to believe) blew into us as we made our way home. Other storms recently came under the guise of Agnes and Babet. Really! Apparently some jobsworth at the Met Office was tasked into giving this 'inclement' intrusion on our daily lives, a name. The first one was Abigail. Then someone suggested that it would be only fair (pun) to alternate the names with boys Christian monikers as well!.

When I was a kid living first in Moss Street and then later in Avondale Drive, we had what we called "Battleaxe's" making our lives a misery (in fairness, revenge for making their lives a misery). Battleaxe's names such as Nellie, Madge, Ethel, Hilda etc.

If global warming and pollution are the main causes of the excessively wet winters we now have, older parishioners will remember the much harsher winters of old.

My brother told me a story of the huge problems incurred when my grandma (who I never knew) died and it took over 2 hours to get her coffin from 1 Lourdes Avenue across the narrow road into the churchyard at St Gerard's due to chest-high snow.

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in calming the storm
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In those days, Lourdes Avenue wasn't even a proper thoroughfare so with no traffic using it, the snow stayed compact. My granddad Charnock had built the first house on Lourdes Avenue (No.1). Prior to modern day innovations such as diggers etc my granddad and then later my uncle used to dig the graves at St Gerard's. When the ground was frozen, it took a pick-axe and gallons of sweat to open up the plot.

I also recall my own experience of serving mass at 7 am at Tardy St Gerard's and having to negotiate the deep snowdrifts on Avondale Drive and Browndge Road to reach church. I remember arriving in the Sacristy a minute before Mass, having been hampered by the snow, only to be 'chastised' by Father McKenzie. It took all my self control to bite my lip and tell him while I was struggling to cross Browndge Road, he only had to role out of bed in the Presbytery to get to Mass. As I was 5ft 2in (aged 9) and he was 6 ft 2in or so, I kept it shut!

When I mentioned Lourdes Avenue earlier having little traffic, in the late 50's, from Emily Street onwards it was still nothing more than a dirt track. The school dinner hall was the present Army Cadet HQ. In winter, the track was wet and muddy and after 100 kids or so had trampled through it, the dinner hall floor was an absolute mess.

So next time somebody complains about Storm Tinkerbell tell them to remember the alternative! **Tony Billington**

Footnote: When a bloke retires, his wife gets twice the husband and only half the income.

Gardening Tip of the Month

Hedgehogs may wake up hungry this month. A saucer of food (not milk) will help them along. I give them moist hedgehog pellets. Celandines are emerging. Birds are claiming their territory. Wash feeders regularly to prevent disease.

Birds in gardens are on the decline. I wonder why? Chemicals, therefore no insects, lack of places to nest, predators. Please put a nest box up if able away from direct sunlight & winds. Clean out in the Autumn as some birds shelter in winter. I have got sweet pea seeds this year. They can be sown indoors Jan to March or outdoors April to May. I like the 'old fashioned mixed' variety.

LW

Mindful March 2024



MONDAY



4 Notice how you speak to yourself and choose to use kind words

TUESDAY



5 Bring to mind people you care about and send love to them

WEDNESDAY



6 If you find yourself rushing, make an effort to slow down

THURSDAY



7 Take three calm breaths at regular intervals during your day

FRIDAY

1 Set an intention to live with awareness and kindness

SATURDAY

2 Notice three things you find beautiful in the outside world

SUNDAY

3 Start today by appreciating your body and that you're alive

11 Stay fully present while drinking your cup of tea or coffee

12 Listen deeply to someone and really hear what they are saying

13 Pause to watch the sky or clouds for a few minutes today

14 Find ways to enjoy any chores or tasks that you do

15 Stop. Breathe. Notice. Repeat regularly

16 Get really absorbed with an interesting or creative activity

17 Look around and spot three things you find unusual or pleasant

18 Have a 'no plans' day and notice how that feels

19 Cultivate a feeling of loving-kindness towards others today

20 Focus on what makes you and others happy today dayofhappiness.net

21 Listen to a piece of music without doing anything else

22 Notice something that is going well, even if today feels difficult

23 Tune into your feelings, without judging or trying to change them

24 Appreciate your hands and all the things they enable you to do

25 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted

26 Choose to spend less time looking at screens today

27 Appreciate nature around you, wherever you are

28 Notice when you're tired and take a break as soon as possible

29 Choose a different route today and see what you notice

30 Mentally scan your body and notice what it is feeling

31 Discover the joy in the simple things of life

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier • Kinder • Together

Walking Route Cards

We usually publish monthly a list of Health Walks & Rambles in and around the Borough, but for the last few months these have not been happening. The walks of course are still there and the Walking route Cards are available via the South Ribble Website at <https://www.southribble.gov.uk/content/walking-route-cards>

Why not put your best foot forward and download one of these free Walking Route Guides?

The walks range in distance from 1.5 miles to almost 8 miles, with starting points to be found all over the borough.

Listed below are the walks you can download and the distances, the first four are very local and you probably know them

- 01. Farington Lodges Walk (1.5 miles)**
- 02. Farington Lodges Walk (3.5 miles)**
- 03. Hope Terrace Walk (5.5 miles)**
- 04. Tardy Gate Walk (1.5 miles)**
05. New Longton & Whitestake Walk (2.5 miles)
06. Longton Coastal Walk (5.0 miles)
07. Longton Brickcroft Walk (1.5 miles)
08. Hutton & Longton Coastal Walk (7.0 miles)
09. Penwortham Heritage Trail 1 (2.0 Miles)
10. Penwortham Heritage Trail 2 (2.5 miles)
11. Penwortham Heritage Trail 3 (4.3 miles)
12. Penwortham Heritage Trail - Howick & Hutton Circular (3 miles)
13. Penwortham & Howick Riverside Walk (4.1 miles)
- 14. Old Tram Road & Walton-le-Dale Walk (5 miles)**
- 15. Bamber Bridge & Walton Park Walk (5.5 miles)**
16. Gregson Lane & Coupe Green Walk (3.6 miles)
17. Nabs Head Samlesbury Walk (5 miles)
- 18. Lostock Hall Heritage Trail (3.5 miles)**
- 19. Lostock Hall and Farington Railway Heritage Trail (3.5 miles)**
- 20. St Mary's Parish Boundary Walk (7.7 miles)**
21. St Leonard's Parish Boundary Walk (5 miles)

**Parish Clergy: Fr Mark Harold (Rural Dean & Parish Priest),
Fr Colin Battell OSB.**

The Presbytery
17C Browndedge Road
Lostock Hall
Preston
PR5 5AA

Tel: 01772 335387 **Mobile 07442 385553 (9am-3pm)**

In an Emergency please phone either

St Marys Browndedge 335168

St Mary's Leyland 455955

St Catherine's Farrington 421174

Contacts

The Primary School 335025

The Parochial Centre 339459

Weekly Services

Sundays: Saturday Vigil 5:30 p.m.
Sunday 10:30 a.m.

Weekdays: **MASS** - Tuesday and Thursday at 9:15 am
Services of Word & Holy Communion - Monday 6:30 pm &
Wednesday at 9:15 am

Reconciliation: Confessions - before Weekend Masses.

Baptisms

To arrange a Baptism please call the parish office on 01772 335387 between 9 -11.45 am. (Mon – Fri). Parents are expected to attend 2 Baptism Preparation meetings before a Baptism can take place. If people have not been in the practice of attending church regularly, they are asked to attend Mass for a period of six weeks prior to the Baptism to help them to be spiritually prepared for the sacrament and to get into the habit of practicing the Faith.

No Priest! What do we do?

If there is an Emergency and no Priest is available for the weekend Masses, the Eucharistic Ministers, particularly those who have been trained, will perform a Holy Communion Service and this will replace the Mass. Please note that this is **Only in an Emergency** and there is no time to arrange for another priest or no other is Priest is available.

Marriages

At least six months notification of Marriage is required. Pre-marriage instruction is mandatory and organised by the Diocese. Please telephone 335387 to arrange Notification and Preparation.

Parish Organisations

CONTACT

Advertising	John Corrigan	316295
Altar Servers	David Walker	629701
A.P.F. & Sacristan	Christine Flanagan	334723
CAFOD	Margaret Cronin	336475
Catechists & Sacramental Programme		335387
Children's Liturgy Group	Lee McNulty	07478703414
Eucharistic Ministers & Readers	Michael Quinlan	467306
Flowers	Carole Hesmondhalgh	339700
Football Club	Phil Tinsley	07775890667
Fund Raising Group		335387
Gift Aid	John Robinson	335387
News & Views, Website , Printers	David Walker	629701
Majella Companions		335387
Marriage Registrars	Margaret Cronin	336475
	Ann Quinlan	467306
Parochial Centre		
Piety Shop	Vivian Page	313910
P.T.A.	Ross Free	339691
Sacred Heart Guild		
Safeguarding Officer	email: safeguarding@saintgerards.org.uk	
School (Staff, Ancillaries & Governors)		335025
Senior Citizens Organisers	Linda Walsh	311654
	Gloria Duffell	339966
Youth Representative	Lee McNulty	07478703414

Items for News & Views can be left at the Presbytery or emailed to the editor at newsviews@saintgerards.org.uk The last day for submissions is the 20th of each month.

www.saintgerards.org.uk

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WHATS ON IN THE PAROCHIAL CENTRE

THIS MARCH

Saturday 2nd March - Natalie Jax

Saturday 9th March - John Michael

Friday 15th March - The Ultimate Boyband Experience - St.
Patrick's weekend special. Irish night with songs from Boyzone
and Westlife plus Irish music and fun.

Tickets £15 and available from the bar.

Saturday 16th March - Tyla

Saturday 23rd March - Paul Lucas

Saturday 30th March - Alan Henry



Quality Cars UK

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Lostock Hall
Preston, Lancashire
PR55AQ

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Mobile: 07836 789446

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01772 254 936

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