



Our Lady and St Gerard's Lostock Hall

News and Views

Issue No 699 April 2026

Easter morning breaks with a promise that changes everything. The stone is rolled away, the tomb stands empty, and the Church proclaims with joy: Christ is risen, alleluia! The darkness of Good Friday has given way to the light of new life, reminding us that God's love is stronger than every fear, every burden, every shadow we carry.

The Risen Lord meets His friends not with reproach, but with peace. "Peace be with you." These words echo across the centuries and into our own lives today. They speak to our homes, our families, our worries, and our hopes. Easter is not only a moment to celebrate — it is an invitation to begin again.

As a parish community, may we carry this Easter light into the places where hope is needed most. May the joy of the Risen Christ fill your hearts this day and throughout the Easter season.

Alleluia, alleluia!



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Walking with the Saints in Eastertide

“Their stories help us recognise the Risen Christ among us.”

Eastertide is a season of joy — fifty days of living in the light of the Resurrection. The Scriptures show the early Church discovering, again and again, that the Risen Christ walks with His people. In the same way, the saints walk with us today. Their lives shine with the hope, courage, and peace that flow from the empty tomb.

During this Easter season, our parish turns to several saints whose feasts fall in these weeks. Each one reveals something of the Resurrection in daily life.

✠ St George – Courage in Christ (23 April)

St George’s story reminds us that Christian courage is not loud or aggressive, but steadfast and rooted in love. He faced persecution with a heart anchored in Christ’s victory. Easter invitation: Where is God calling me to stand firm in faith? Prayer: Risen Lord, give us the courage to choose what is right, even when it costs.

✠ St Catherine of Siena – A Heart on Fire (29 April)

Catherine lived with a fierce love for Christ and His Church. Her writings overflow with the joy of the Resurrection — the certainty that Christ’s love transforms everything it touches. Easter invitation: How is Christ calling me to deeper love and truth? Prayer: Risen Lord, set our hearts on fire with Your love.

✠ St Joseph the Worker – Holiness in the Ordinary (1 May)

Joseph shows us that the Resurrection reaches into the workshop, the home, the school, the office. Easter is not only a moment of glory — it is a new way of living every day. Easter invitation: Where can I bring patience, gentleness, or integrity into my work? Prayer: Risen Lord, bless the work of our hands and make it fruitful.

✠ The English Martyrs – Witness in the Spirit (4 May)

These men and women lived the Easter message with extraordinary courage. Like the Apostles in the Acts of the Apostles, they proclaimed Christ even when it meant danger, loss, or death. Easter invitation: How can I witness to my faith with joy and humility? Prayer: Risen Lord, strengthen us to be Your witnesses in our time.

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Closing Reflection

As we walk with these saints, we discover that Easter is not just a season — it is a way of life. The Risen Christ meets us in courage, in love, in work, in witness, in peace, in calling, and in the quiet unfolding of our own story.

May this Eastertide renew our parish with joy, hope, and the deep assurance that Christ is truly risen and walks with us still.

How Vatican II Transformed the Catholic Mass

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) was one of the most significant events in modern Church history. Convened by Pope John XXIII and continued under Pope Paul VI, the Council sought to renew the Church's life and mission in a rapidly changing world. Among its most visible and lasting reforms were the changes to the celebration of the Mass, guided primarily by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

These reforms reshaped the experience of Catholic worship for millions of people. What follows is a clear, accessible overview of the major changes and the reasons behind them.

1. A New Vision for Participation

Before Vatican II, the Mass was celebrated in Latin, with the priest facing the altar. While beautiful and ancient, this form often left the congregation as quiet observers. Vatican II sought to change that. The Council called for the “full, conscious, and active participation” of the faithful in the liturgy. This principle became the driving force behind every subsequent reform.

2. From Latin to the Vernacular

One of the most noticeable changes was the introduction of local languages into the Mass. Before Vatican II: The Tridentine Mass was celebrated entirely in Latin. After Vatican II: The Mass could be celebrated in the vernacular, making prayers, readings, and responses understandable to all. This shift helped the faithful engage more deeply with Scripture and the prayers of the Church.



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3. The Priest Faces the People

Traditionally, the priest celebrated *ad orientem*—facing the altar, symbolically facing God with the people. After the Council, many parishes adopted the *versus populum* posture, with the priest facing the congregation. This was not mandated explicitly by Vatican II, but it became a widespread expression of the Council's desire for greater communal participation and visibility in the liturgy.

4. Expanded Use of Scripture

Vatican II introduced a new three-year cycle of Sunday readings and a two-year weekday cycle, vastly increasing the amount of Scripture proclaimed at Mass. This reform reflected the Council's teaching in *Dei Verbum* that Scripture should be more accessible to the faithful and central to Christian life.

5. Liturgical Music Renewed

The Council encouraged the preservation of Gregorian chant but also opened the door to new musical forms that reflected local cultures. This led to: Hymns in the vernacular, Greater congregational singing, Wider use of instruments beyond the organ. These changes supported the Council's emphasis on active participation

6. Simplification and Clarity in Ritual

The post-conciliar reform introduced the *Novus Ordo Missae* (New Order of Mass), implemented in many parishes beginning in 1964–1969. Catholics immediately noticed differences, as described in contemporary accounts of the first Sunday the new form was used. Key simplifications included: Clearer rubrics, Removal of duplicate prayers, A more streamlined structure, Greater use of spoken prayers rather than silent ones. These changes aimed to make the liturgy more intelligible and spiritually fruitful.



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7. Greater Role for the Laity

Vatican II emphasized the dignity and mission of the laity (*Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*). In the Mass, this translated into new ministries: Lectors, Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, Lay cantors and musicians. This broadened participation reflected the Council's vision of the Church as the People of God working together in worship and mission.

8. A Pastoral Approach to the Modern World

The Council's broader aim—expressed in *Gaudium et Spes*—was to engage the modern world with renewed openness and pastoral sensitivity. The liturgical reforms were part of this effort: a Mass that was understandable, participatory, and rooted in Scripture would better equip Catholics to live their faith in contemporary society.

Conclusion: A Mass Renewed for a New Era

The changes to the Catholic Mass after Vatican II were not cosmetic adjustments but a profound reorientation toward participation, understanding, and community. Whether welcomed or debated, these reforms reshaped Catholic worship globally and continue to influence parish life today. They were rooted in a desire to preserve the Church's ancient heritage while making the liturgy a living encounter with Christ for modern believers.

I was 13 years old when the English Mass was introduced in our church in Sussex, I had been serving for 4 or 5 years at that time and the adjustment wasn't easy. I always found Latin a bit of a tongue twister as it was so fast and it was only the servers and the priest that actually said anything as far as I could tell.

To help the congregation at the weekend masses the people were told to follow a particular senior server who sat at the side of the Sanctuary. If he stood up or knelt down you followed him. It didn't take long.

Elizabeth Samuel Hampers

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When Did Altar Rails Start Being Removed?

Altar rails began disappearing after the liturgical reforms that followed the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), but not because Vatican II required their removal. The Council's Constitution on the Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1963) never mentioned altar rails at all. Their removal was instead a post-conciliar architectural and pastoral trend, especially from the mid-1960s through the 1970s.

“WOW” 70 years and still going strong



Antony Eden was Prime Minister, Doris Day sang Que, Sera, Sera whatever will be, will be and Dean Martin sang Memories are made of This, 1956 has lasting memories for a very special couple.

Terry and Marina McNulty were married on the 2nd of April 1956 and still living happily in our parish. Marina was the middle child of Charles and May Tuson and Terry the eldest son of Jack and Anne McNulty. They both grew up on Watkin Lane and share a lifetime of memories living in the same close community.

Marina attended Avondale Drive and Terry went to St Gerard's. After school Terry began his working life as a joiner at B J Watson (he might have worked on our first house when we lived in Glendale) and Marina a clerk at Leyland Motors.

It was during their teenage years that their story truly began when they started courting. When first married, they lived with Marina's parents, the usual thing to do in those days. Soon after they bought their first home in Church Lane, where they started building their family life that has meant so much to them both and where their sons Stephen and Michael were born.

Marina was in Farington Art Group where she enjoyed expressing herself through her oil painting. To create the doll's house she has at home, which must have taken a lot of patience and time, and it must be seen to be believed.



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Kirsty Thompson, Director and Solicitor, holds The Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) qualification and The Association of Lifetime Lawyers accreditation.

They have had many interests over the years, but their greatest passion has been caravanning, spending many treasured memories with the family in St Ives Cornwall.



Marina is a very talented lady, and I am sure everyone in church will

own a bob hat knitted by her. Her knitting is mostly done for charities and as a parish we have benefitted a great deal and can only say a big thank you and congratulations on the day.

“Marina likes to chat and Terry likes to listen or has to!” on meeting Terry and Marina in the new Lidl store, Terry had finished the shopping before Marina had finished talking to me.

Reaching the remarkable milestone of 70 years of marriage is a testament to a lifetime of love, commitment and shared experiences.

Congratulations and lots of love to Terry and Marina from all at St Gerard’s.

Grace Robinson

Time Flies

When fairy folk reset the clocks,
They pinched an hour from nature’s box;
The rabbits cried, “We’ve been misled—
It should be morning... feels like bed!”

The tulips huffed, “We need more sun!
This early start is not much fun.”
The daisies chimed, “We’re half awake—
Who moved the hours for goodness’ sake?”



So Easter dawns in cheerful riot—
Magic loud and far from quiet.
Clocks leap forward, nature frets,
Yet summer sneaks in, no regrets.



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Women's Leadership in the Catholic Church

Comparison of the 2026 Synod Report with Past Church Teaching Introduction.

In March 2026, the Catholic Church published the Final Report of Synod Study Group No. 5, entitled Women's Participation in the Life and Leadership of the Church.

This document builds on previous Catholic teaching while proposing significant developments in how women participate in leadership and governance within the Church.

This paper compares the 2026 Synod Report with earlier Church teaching, highlighting areas of continuity and change.

1. Human Dignity and Baptism - Past Church Teaching - For decades, Catholic teaching has affirmed the equal dignity of women and men, rooted in creation and baptism.

Popes such as John XXIII and Paul VI described the growing recognition of women's dignity as a "sign of the times". These teachings emphasised moral equality but rarely addressed Church structures directly.

2026 Synod Report - The synod report reaffirms this dignity but moves further, stating that women's participation in leadership is a right grounded in baptism, not a privilege granted by clergy. Women's gifts and charisms are presented as essential to the Church's mission. **Key development:** dignity now carries institutional consequences, not only moral affirmation.

2. Culture and the Church - Past Church Teaching - Earlier documents acknowledged that cultural attitudes could restrict women's roles, but tended to address these indirectly, urging patience and gradual change.

2026 Synod Report - The report speaks more directly, identifying cultural barriers within the Church itself, including: clericalism "machismo" the uncritical transfer of priestly authority into all areas of Church life.



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The report calls for cultural conversion so that Gospel values, not inherited customs, shape Church practice. **Key development:** internal Church culture is named as a problem requiring reform.

3. Leadership and Governance - Past Church Teaching - Traditionally, Church governance has been closely linked to ordination. Women exercised leadership mainly through advisory, educational, or charitable roles rather than formal authority.

2026 Synod Report - The report states clearly that: there is no theological impediment to women exercising leadership in governance roles not requiring ordination authority can be exercised on the basis of baptism and charism, distinct from Holy Orders It highlights existing examples of women appointed to senior roles in the Roman Curia as models for the wider Church. **Key development:** governance is no longer viewed as the exclusive domain of the ordained.

4. Ministries and Participation - Past Church Teaching Since Vatican II, lay participation has been encouraged, but leadership roles remained limited in scope and authority.

2026 Synod Report - The synod proposes: - new recognised ministries for lay men and women expanded leadership roles in evangelisation, administration, and diocesan governance a “charismatic path” alongside the sacramental path of ordained ministry Women are described not as helpers or substitutes, but as co-responsible leaders in mission. **Key development:** lay leadership is treated as normal and necessary, not exceptional.

5. Women and Holy Orders - Past Church Teaching - The Church has consistently taught that: priestly ordination is reserved to men the question of women deacons remains unresolved

2026 Synod Report - The report does not change this teaching. It states that the issue of women deacons is “not yet ripe” and refers the matter to earlier commissions that advised against change at this time. Continuity: sacramental teaching remains unchanged.

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6. Scripture and History - Past Church Teaching - Women in Scripture and Church history were often highlighted as models of holiness, service, or obedience.

2026 Synod Report - The report presents women such as: Mary Magdalene, Catherine of Siena, Joan of Arc, Hildegard of Bingen Dorothy Day. not only as saints, but as leaders who exercised real authority and influence in the Church's life. **Key development:** history is used to justify contemporary leadership roles for women.

Overall Conclusion - The 2026 Synod Report represents development, not rupture, in Catholic teaching. **What remains the same** teaching on Holy Orders, the sacramental structure of the Church

What has developed - leadership grounded in baptism, not ordination alone, explicit critique of clerical culture, recognition of women's right to participate in governance, concrete proposals for structural change.

In short, earlier teaching affirmed women's dignity; the synod report insists that dignity must now shape how the Church is organised and led.

Gardening Tip of the Month

Look around. Spring is bursting forth. The sun is slightly warmer also. If you want to split plants e.g. Chives do it now. The worms are surfacing after wintering in the deeper layers to avoid frosts. A welcome meal for Robins and Blackbirds. We pruned the hydrangea too.

Here are a few kitchen items which are food for plants. Place around the base. Used Tea bags for Roses, Banana Peel, Citrus Peel, Coffee grounds, crushed egg shells for any plant.

The kiss of the sun for pardon.
the song of the birds for mirth.
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than anywhere on earth.
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**Parish Clergy: Fr Mark Harold (Rural Dean & Parish Priest),
Tel: 01772 335168 (Office)
Assistant Priests: Fr Colin Battell OSB. Fr Charles Essien
Tel: 01772 321201 (Monastery)**

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 Sunday 10:30 a.m.

Weekdays: MASS - Monday 6:30 pm, Tuesday & Wednesday 9:15 am
 Thursday 6:30 pm

Reconciliation: Confessions - Saturday 5 pm to 5:15 pm.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Monday 6 to 6:30 pm

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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.

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The last day for submissions is the 20th of each month.

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Saturday	Mass	7 pm Vigil

4th	Holy Saturday
5th	Easter Sunday
12th	Second Sunday of Easter
13th	St Martin
19th	Third Sunday of Easter
21st	St Anselm
23rd	St George
24th	St Fidelis of Sigmaringen
25th	St Mark
26th	Fourth Sunday of Easter
28th	St Peter Chanel
29th	St Catherine of Siena
30th	St Pius V

1 st May	St Joseph the Worker
2nd	St Athanasius
3rd	Fifth Sunday of Easter
4th	The English Martyrs

Easter Triduum Liturgies
"The Paschal Triduum is the matrix of our personal and communitarian lives"- Pope Francis.

Maundy Thursday:
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Holy Saturday: The Easter Vigil:
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