



Our Lady and St Gerard's Lostock Hall

News and Views

Issue No 700 May 2026

May arrives clothed in freshness and light, a season that echoes the joy of Easter and invites us to notice how new life is quietly unfolding all around us. The risen Christ continues to walk with His people, strengthening faith, renewing hope, and drawing hearts ever closer to God.

Traditionally dedicated to Mary, this month invites us to look to her example of trust and gentle faithfulness. In her “yes,” we see what it means to welcome God into our lives with openness and courage. Like Mary, we are called to carry Christ to others — not always with words, but through compassion, patience, and love.

The Easter message remains alive among us: that life is stronger than death, hope stronger than despair, and love stronger than all that weighs us down. In our daily routines and shared parish life, God continues to work, nurturing what has been planted and bringing growth in ways we may not yet see.

As a parish community, may we walk together in the light of the Resurrection, supporting one another in faith and prayer.



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Walking with the Saints in Eastertide - Continued

In the heart of Eastertide, the Church walks slowly, allowing the joy of the Resurrection to sink into ordinary life. The saints of May teach us that risen life takes shape through fidelity, courage, repentance, and love—often quietly, sometimes at great cost.

St Joseph the Worker (1 May) opens the month by anchoring Easter faith in daily labour. The Resurrection does not remove us from ordinary work; it sanctifies it. Joseph shows that holiness is formed through obedience, responsibility, and trust, hidden yet complete.

On 4 May, **the English Martyrs** stand as witnesses to Resurrection hope lived under persecution. Their refusal to abandon the faith, even at the cost of their lives, reminds us that Easter joy is not optimism but conviction: Christ lives, and therefore truth must be obeyed.

Ss Nereus and Achilleus (12 May), early Roman martyrs, teach that conversion often begins with refusal—refusal to serve violence, refusal to betray conscience. In Eastertide, their witness proclaims that new life in Christ reshapes loyalties and demands integrity.

On 13 May, **Our Lady of Fatima** calls the Easter Church to repentance, prayer, and trust. Her message does not distract from the Resurrection but deepens it: peace flows from conversion, and joy matures through fidelity to prayer and sacrifice.

St John I, Pope and Martyr (18 May) follows, reminding us that unity and truth sometimes require suffering. His witness teaches that Easter joy does not avoid conflict but remains faithful within it.

With **St Dunstan of Canterbury** (19 May), Eastertide touches reform and renewal. Dunstan shows that Resurrection life reshapes institutions as well as hearts, restoring integrity, discipline, and prayer where faith has grown lax.

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St Bernardine of Siena (20 May) brings the Holy Name of Jesus into the public square. His preaching reveals Easter faith spoken clearly and joyfully, healing divisions and renewing devotion among the faithful.

On 21 May, **St Christopher Magallanes** and Companions, martyrs of Mexico, testify that Resurrection hope survives even when the Church is silenced by force. Their courage teaches that Christ's risen life cannot be extinguished by persecution.

St Rita of Cascia (22 May) embodies Easter mercy in wounded circumstances. Her life of patience, reconciliation, and forgiveness reveals the Resurrection working not through triumph, but through enduring love.

St Philip Neri (26 May) restores laughter and joy to holiness. His playful charity reminds us that Easter joy is not naïve but deeply rooted in love of God and neighbour.

With St Augustine of Canterbury (27 May), the Resurrection crosses borders. His missionary obedience teaches that Easter faith must be carried outward, even into uncertainty, for the sake of souls yet to believe.

St Paul VI brings Eastertide into the life of the Church itself. Ordained on this day, he served Christ through priesthood, episcopacy, and papacy. He led the Church through a time of renewal with courage and fidelity. His holiness was marked by patience, interior struggle, and deep love for the Church.

Closing Reflection

As Eastertide draws us through May and into June, the saints remind us that the Resurrection is not a moment to admire but a life to be lived. With Mary we learn to receive Christ quietly; with the apostles and martyrs we learn to carry Him courageously. Walking beside these holy companions, we discover that the risen Lord still moves through ordinary days—strengthening faith, kindling hope, and sending us forward in love. May their witness teach our hearts to walk on, attentive and faithful, until Christ is fully formed in us.



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The Sisters of Mercy 1989 - 1994

On a recent stay at Villa Palazzola, the Venerable English College's villa set in the hills south of Rome, Fr Mark met Sister Assumpta Walsh, a Sister of Mercy, now in her 90s, who had visited our parishes here in Lostock Hall and Bamber Bridge during her Order's five-year mission here between 1989 and 1994. Subsequently Sister Assumpta sent to Fr Mark an excerpt from the archives in her convent, recording the mission of the Sisters of Mercy in our parishes.

The presence of the Sisters of Mercy in Bamber Bridge was established in 1989, following a request for a community to take over pastoral duties from the Franciscan Missionaries of St Joseph. The invitation came from Fr Edmund Hatton OSB of St Mary's, Brownedge, who was seeking not only practical support but what he described as a "feminine contribution" to parish life, rooted in a model of shared responsibility between clergy, religious and laity.

Following a period of preparation at Crossbeck, a small community of three Sisters was formed, and they moved into Rose Cottage on Brownedge Lane, formally establishing the foundation on 23 October 1989. From the outset, this was something of an experiment within the Institute. With permission from the Superior General, the community was set up without a designated Superior or Sister in Charge, and instead operated on a fully shared model of decision-making and responsibility in both community life and ministry.

The community typically consisted of three Sisters at any one time. Sr Anne Patricia Hewitt was present from the foundation through to closure and worked primarily in Lostock Hall. Sr M John Turley, also a foundation member, joined fully at Christmas 1989 after completing a teaching post in Leyburn. Sr M Evangelist Doherty was part of the original group and remained until July 1992, when she moved to Whitby, at which point Sr Ann Marie Gillick joined the community in September 1992 and remained until the end of the foundation in 1994.

Their ministry was centred on both St Mary's, Brownedge and Our Lady and St Gerard's, Lostock Hall, and was characterised by a strong emphasis on the renewal of faith through parishPage 7



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engagement. The Sisters were closely involved in sacramental preparation, running programmes for Baptism, First Holy Communion, and were instrumental in establishing the RCIA in the parishes. Alongside this, they undertook extensive pastoral visiting, particularly to the elderly and housebound, led prayer groups, and established initiatives such as a Friday group for young mothers.

Their work also extended into local schools and youth activity. Sr Ann Marie Gillick in particular became actively involved in school life, leading a folk group and reviving the local Guide Company. More broadly, the Sisters participated in wider Church initiatives, including peace vigils and formation work, and maintained a close and mutually enriching relationship with the Benedictine clergy serving the parishes.

The annals also note moments where the Sisters' presence proved especially significant. During a period of illness affecting Fr Rupert Everest, Sr Anne's steady leadership ensured that St Gerard's parish life continued in an organised and active way, reflecting the practical outworking of the shared responsibility model that had shaped the foundation from the beginning.

The Sisters remained in Bamber Bridge for five years, withdrawing in September 1994. Their departure was not due to any lack of success in the mission, but rather to a shortage of personnel within the Province and the appointment of Sr Anne to a new role on the Institute Resource Team. The response locally was one of genuine regret, with parish records noting that Sr Anne had "more than amply filled the post of Assistant Pastor," a reflection of the depth of their contribution during their time in the parish.

Postscript: The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy was founded by the Venerable Catherine McAuley (1778 - 1841) in Dublin in 1831 and by the 1950s had grown to 22,000 Sisters worldwide. Initially providing a school, a hostel, laundry and visitation of the sick in Dublin, the work of the order developed and spread worldwide to include hospitals, field hospitals in war zones, teacher training colleges and refuges for children and, in 19th century Australia, ex-convicts. Crossbeck Convent was in

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Normanby in the Diocese of Middlesbrough, and was founded in 1919, closing in 2003. The Order continues to serve in several locations throughout the UK and abroad.

Can you help? Do you have any memories or photographs of Sr Anne Patricia Hewitt, Sr M John Turley, Sr M Evangelist Doherty, or Sr Ann Marie Gillick and their time in Lostock Hall and Bamber Bridge? Please contact us if you do!

Dave Gorman

MARY, MOTHER OF HOPE FOR BRITAIN

May is a special month in the life of the Church, dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. This year, we reflect on Mary as Mother of Hope for Britain, at a time when many people feel anxious about the future, isolated in daily life, or unsure where to turn.

Mary's life was not free from difficulty or uncertainty. At the Annunciation, she said yes to God without knowing what lay ahead. At Cana, she gently pointed others to her Son with the words, "Do whatever he tells you."

At the foot of the Cross, Mary remained faithful when hope seemed lost. In every moment, she trusted that God was at work. Britain has long been entrusted to Mary, honoured as Our Lady's Dowry, and prayer continues for our nation through devotion and pilgrimage, especially at Our Lady of Walsingham. These traditions remind us that faith and hope are not relics of the past, but living gifts for today.

During this month of May, we are invited to turn again to Mary in prayer—at home, in our parish, and as a community. As a mother, Mary draws close to us, listens to our needs, and leads us always to Christ, who is our true hope.

QUOTE

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful , committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has"

Margaret Mead



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Praying The Rosary

Many people want to pray the Rosary but struggle to fit it into already full days. The good news is that the Rosary is very adaptable and was never meant to be a burden. Here are some gentle, realistic ways to pray it in busy lives.

Keep it simple and flexible

It doesn't have to be all at once. One decade prayed attentively is still real prayer. Five decades spread across a day count just as much as five in one sitting. Quality over quantity. A distracted but sincere Rosary offered to God is better than none at all.

Build it into what you already do

During routine activities: commuting, walking, washing up, folding laundry, or waiting in queues. With audio help: Rosary apps, podcasts, or recordings can guide you when your mind is tired. Before sleep: even one decade at night can become a peaceful habit.

Anchor it to daily moments

Morning: one decade to entrust the day to God - Midday: one decade during a break or lunchtime walk - Evening: one or two decades to reflect and give thanks - Night: a final decade before bed. Over a day, that's a full Rosary without ever setting aside a long block of time.

Adapt to your state of life

Parents: pray aloud with children, even briefly, or silently while caring for them. - Working adults: keep beads in a pocket or bag as a reminder to pray when a moment opens. Students: pray a decade before studying or after finishing a task.

Let it be a conversation, not a performance

If you lose focus, simply return to the prayer without guilt. Mary leads you to Christ even through imperfect prayer. The Rosary is meant to support life, not compete with it.

Rosary Apps & Podcasts



Hallow. Laudate, Rosary Pro are apps and Daily Rosary, Rosary with Scripture and Bishop Robert Barron are all podcast that can be used. Just search "Daily Rosary" in your podcast app.



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1963 - An Eventful Year - Part 3

Continuing from part 2 in issue 698 March 2026 edition of the "News and Views" re-The Holiday in No.10 of events in 1963. I returned home from Trafalgar Road, Birkdale, home of Southport CCC having watched Lancashire beat Middlesex before lunch on day 3 of a County Championship Cricket Match (a rare win in early 60's)

A 14-year-old travelling alone by train in those days was a norm, compared to today's broken society. When I arrived home, I was told by my mum that I had to strip off my only decent clothes and stick them in the wash as we (Mum, Dad, Moi) were going on holiday to Bournemouth at 10 pm that night. Apparently, someone had cancelled last minute on Sylvester Birchby's Annual Coach trip from his garage (Now Spar) at Four Lane Ends to Bournemouth overnight. The coach was an old Bedford model (unknown) but seen all over Malta at one time. Luckily for us, we had a heatwave that week and had a great time. We met another parishioner, Wilf Seddon and family on the beach and spent a lot of time with them. His kids Barbara and David went to Tardy St Gerards at the same time as myself.

The biggest local event of 1963, apart for the new extension and tower at Church was the opening of the brand-new library on January 28th on the site of Sowerbutts Farm. Sir Harry Pilkington (of Pilkington Glass) did the honours.

A lot of locals wanted a swimming pool instead but were told there were pools nearby in Leyland and Bamber Bridge. Sixty odd years later and nothing changes for Lostock Hallers!

The old 'library' had been housed in the council school, Tuesday and Thursday evenings after school in the School Hall via Moss Lane schoolyard and cloakroom.

Despite my fond memories of Father Wilfrid McKenzie OSB woe betide you if you got on the wrong side of Father Mac. He had several pet peeves and fortunately, apart from 'sapping' (nicking Apples!) in his orchard and getting caught.



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I merely witnessed others crossing the line. (the orchard incidentally was cleared to make way for the Bowling Green, which opened in 1983)

The retiring headmistress, Miss Kelsall helped pay for a carpet on the entire Sanctuary as her parting gift. Whoever thought Pale Green was a suitable colour to be constantly trampled on, one can only guess. No-one ("Father Mac" excepting) could go on the Sanctuary without wearing black gollies (Pumps).

One unfortunate Altar Server somehow spilt hot wax off his 'torch' and was never seen again. Only joking. Now over 70 years on from its first carpet the Sanctuary has now been re-carpeted, thanks to another kind donor.

When the new extension and tower was built, Father Mac disapproved of any parishioner standing in the porch during Sunday Mass, even if the church was almost full. (Unlike nowadays). He 'invited' the 'porch dwellers' into the main church before he would start Mass. If looks could kill, there would have been several dead bodies, if any parishioner decided to take a short cut down the centre aisle back to their pew after receiving Holy Communion. One thing is certain - if you crossed 'Father Mac' you usually only did it once!

With dwindling attendances at Churches of all denominations nowadays, it seems that it doesn't matter where you stand or whichever route you take, so long as you are attending Mass.

Despite Father Mac, Sunday Mass (es) were always well attended, mainly due to less distractions as there today.

Tony Billington

QUOTE

"Do your little bit of good where you are. It's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world"

Desmond Tutu

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Bloom Where you are Planted



Oh, to be in England now that April is there! Wrote Robert Browning while living in Italy. April has now passed but looking at mother nature in the countryside and gardens, we can appreciate our beautiful land.

Pope Francis wrote "Nature is a magnificent gift in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of infinite beauty and goodness—the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise"

The longer days and lighter nights allow us freedom to roam at will and see earth's beauty. Thanks to our volunteers, our church grounds are looking particularly good.

"A flower cannot blossom without sunshine, and a man cannot live without love"

"As you walk upon this sacred earth treat each step as a prayer"

Grace Robinson

The Starfish Story

One day, an old man was walking on the beach after a storm, which had washed hundreds of starfish onto the shore, when he noticed a young boy who was picking up starfish and throwing them back into the ocean.

The old man asked the boy, "what are you doing?" the boy replied, "putting starfish back in the ocean so they don't die"

The old man said "there are thousands of starfish. You can't possibly make a difference" the boy then placed another starfish in the ocean, smiled, and said, "I made a difference for that one"

Adapted from Loren Eiseley's "The Star Thrower"

**Parish Clergy: Fr Mark Harold (Rural Dean & Parish Priest),
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Weekly Services

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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

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 a Baptism Preparation meeting 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.

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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.

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Private Prayer	Tuesday & Thursday	3 pm to 4 pm
Saturday	Mass	7 pm Vigil

2 nd May	St Athanasius
3rd	5th Sunday of Easter
4 th	The English Martyrs
10th	6th Sunday of Easter
12 th	St Pancras
13 th	Our Lady of Fatima
14th	The Ascension of the Lord
17th	7th Sunday of Easter
18 th	St John 1
19 th	St Dunstan
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22 nd	St Rita of Cascia

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