

CATHEDRAL OF ST MARY & ST HELEN HOLY CROSS AND ALL SAINTS

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SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)

Sunday, 15 February 2026

Spiritual Reflection:

Paul was a Pharisee. Before his conversion to Christ, he could almost have been a poster boy for a religious sect. We know this because he tells us so - he wasn't immune to a little bit of boasting, if it might help to further the gospel message. Reflecting on what an impressive Pharisee he had been, Paul writes: 'If



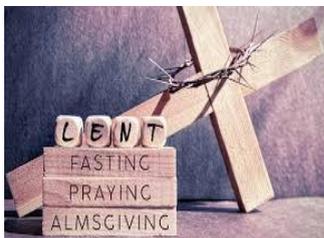
someone else thinks that they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more; circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the Church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless'. That's a clear message, isn't it?

Nevertheless, in today's Gospel Jesus confronts us with the truth that 'unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven'.

So where does that leave us? How does our righteousness exceed this impressive display of righteousness and pursuit of a holy life?

Well, if we go back to Paul, we discover the secret of the righteousness that Jesus had in mind. Paul had come to understand that we don't stand before God based on our own righteousness. But rather we stand before God based on Jesus' righteousness. We tend to think of the things we do for God: we pray, we go to church, we fast, we give to charity, and we strive to be noble and good. This, however, isn't what makes us righteous because righteousness cannot be earned - it can only be received. Paul put it like this: 'For Jesus Christ's sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith'. We can exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees by trusting in the saving death of Jesus, believing him to be our Saviour and Lord, and looking to the righteousness of Christ and not our own.

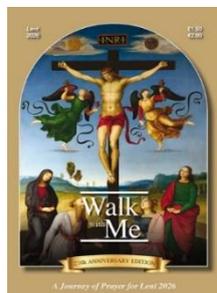
Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,



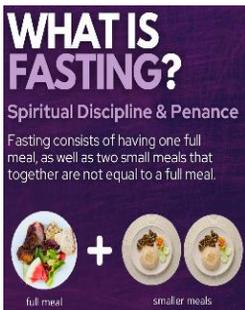
ASH WEDNESDAY: Is on the **18th February 2026** and marks the beginning of the Holy Season of Lent. This Penitential Season is given to us by the Church to help us prepare ourselves spiritually for the 'Great Holy Week', which retraces the Lord Jesus' last days here on earth. We journey with Him through His Passion, Death & Resurrection. This is a familiar journey, and

as Catholic Christians, let us make a very special effort to enter this Holy Season with renewed faith and vigour! The Holy Masses with Distribution of Ashes will take place at **9.15am, 1.10pm & 7.30pm**. Please make every effort possible to attend one of these Masses. As it will be Half-term holidays, parents, I ask you to bring your children to one of the masses.

PRAYER: The Three main disciplines of Lent are Prayer, Fasting & Almsgiving (Charity). These next Forty days will give us the opportunity to really make a special effort in our spiritual lives with our personal prayer. Why not put aside a few moments every day as your very special prayer time! We have little Prayer Reflection Books available at £1.50 each called 'WALK WITH ME', these can be kept in your inside pocket or a lady's handbag and can be used to help with prayer.



Spiritual reading during Lent can really enhance and deepen our understanding of the Lord Jesus and bring us closer to Him. Also spending time before the Blessed Sacrament; or join us for Holy Hour on ***Mondays at 6.30pm*** and ***Wednesday at 9.45am***, or Stations of the Cross on ***Fridays at 7.00pm*** and ***Sundays at 5.00pm***.



FRIDAY FASTING: Was restored in England & Wales. Personal Penance identifies us with the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Friday has always been the traditional Fast Day, as it reminds us of Good Friday, the day on which the Lord gave himself completely for the Salvation of Humanity. The re-establishment of this Friday Fast means that we abstain from the eating of meat every Friday! (Not just during Lent). A little sacrifice in our diet once a week will certainly not harm our health. As families, it would be good to pray grace before & after meals together. these are practical and visible ways of our personal self-sacrifice!

ALMSGIVING: or works of Charity have always been associated with the Catholic Faith. We have a special Fast Day for CAFOD during Lent, ***Friday, 27th February 2026***. This is a very practical way to associate ourselves with those who are far less fortunate than ourselves. You may like to adopt a Third World Project, or, you may know of someone who is housebound and might like to visit them or shop for them. Also, **FOOD BANK box is available in the narthex to receive your food items.** Anything that reaches out to someone else in charity can only be a good thing! Please make a very special effort to enter this Holy Season of Lent in faith and Love.



SERIES OF LENTEN LECTURES: As were about to enter the Lenten Season, and Ash Wednesday is only 10 days away, 18th February. It gives me great pleasure to inform you that I have secured four speakers this year for our Lenten Talks. The theme of our talks this year is: What does it truly mean to

be Catholic?

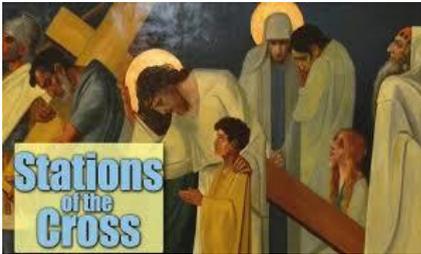
Talk 1: Wednesday 25th February. Abbot Hugh Allan, O Praem. “I Believe...” Living and Proclaiming the Catholic Faith.

Talk 2: Wednesday 4th March. Rev Msgr Kevin W Hale, VG. Being Catholic and the call to holiness as seen in the lives of some recently canonised saints.

Talk 3: Wednesday 11th March. Mr Mauro Iannicelli. Prayer as the Foundation of our Catholic Life.

Talk 4: Wednesday 18th March. Rev Msgr John Armitage. The uniqueness of Catholicism for British Society.

All the Lenten Talks will take place in the Parish Hall, commencing at 7.30pm. Please do avail yourselves of the opportunity to hear these gifted speakers. What better way to truly enter the Holy Lenten Season!

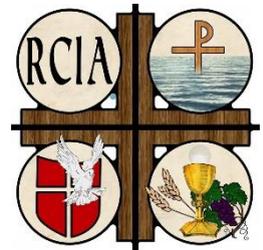


TRADITIONAL DEVOTIONS FOR LENT
- STATIONS OF THE CROSS:

Will take place on the *Friday Evening of Lent at 7.00pm, also on Sunday afternoon at 5.00pm.* This Lenten Devotion retraces the last day of Jesus' life on Good Friday. Step by step we journey with the Lord as he

makes his way to Calvary and His Crucifixion. This is a beautiful spiritual journey, that we are privileged to make with Our Blessed Lord. Because Jesus is making this sacrifice of his own life on behalf of the whole of sinful humanity. He truly becomes the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." If you have never prayed this devotion before, I really would encourage everyone to at least come on one occasion and join us for this devotion.

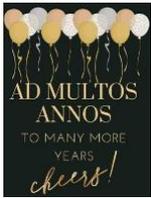
THE RITE OF ELECTION: This year there will be twelve Catechumens and Candidates for the Easter Sacraments. The Rite of Election will take place on the First Sunday of Lent **22nd February 2026 at 3.00pm.** This is when all the RCIA catechumens & candidates throughout the Diocese of Brentwood gather at the Cathedral and are formally accepted and presented to Bishop Alan. I would like to



commend all our catechumens and candidates to your prayers over the Lenten Season, as they continue in their final preparations for the reception of the Easter Sacraments. This is truly a great moment in their lives of faith, when they become one with us through faith and of course, receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist for the first time.

NEW ENQUIRERS FOR SEPTEMBER 2026: Each year we run the RCIA Journey of Faith Programme. If you know of anyone who may be interested in learning more about the Roman Catholic Faith, possibly with the view of receiving the Easter Sacraments, please contact Fr John at Clergy House Tel No: 01277 265235. Fr John will be only too happy to

explain what is involved in the RCIA Programme and the commitment in faith that is involved.



CONGRATULATIONS: To Tara O'Neill & James McDonnell who were married at the Cathedral on Saturday 14th February 2026. May the Lord continue to bless them through the Sacrament of Matrimony. We wish them every joy and happiness in their married life for the years to come. Ad multos annos!

RCIA PROGRAMME - JOURNEY OF FAITH: There is no RCIA session this week. The programme continues next *Thursday, 26th February 2026.* Please do keep our twelve enquirers in your thoughts and prayers, especially as they make the very important decision to be received into full communion with the Roman Catholic faith at Easter 2026. Theme: *The Church's Moral Teaching.*



BAPTISMS: If there are parents wishing to have their children baptised at Brentwood Cathedral, could you kindly contact the Parish Office as soon as possible. For first time parents there is a Baptismal Preparation Programme run by Fr Matúš. Baptisms take place on Saturdays at 11.00am & 12.00 Noon, and Sundays at 1.00pm.

PLEASE PRAY FOR: Father John who celebrates his 71st birthday on *Sunday, 15th February* and Father Matus, who celebrates his 34th birthday on *Monday, 16th February.*

May God bless you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Fr. John". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

PARISH REPOSITORY: This is our little religious shop on the Narthex of the Cathedral. We have a selection of religious good and cards for all occasions. Prayer Books, Children's Books, rosaries, statues, medals, holy pictures. Also, we are able to order in anything you request, either speak to Margaret Walker, or one of the Repository helpers on duty at the various masses each week.

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT TERMINAL - While the credit card terminal is being repaired, I would ask that you please use the QR codes (which are posted on the noticeboard in the Narthex) to make your donations. Thank you.

NOTICES FOR THE NEWSLETTER - If anyone has any items they would like included in the weekly newsletter, please send the details to the Parish Office by Wednesday lunchtime.

COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS TODAY will be hosted by the SVP. Next week will be the turn of the Scouts. All are welcome, so please do join us.

THE FRIDAY FRIENDSHIP LUNCH Every Friday all are welcome to come along to the parish hall (**12 noon - 2.00pm**) for a soup lunch, cakes and drinks and most importantly, friendly faces and an opportunity to meet up with others.

CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP will meet again on **Thursday, 12th February from 7.00pm - 8.30pm**. Everyone is welcome so please do feel free to join us for prayer and praise.

MASS TIMES in the Cathedral:

SATURDAY VIGIL MASS at 6.30pm

SUNDAY: 8.00am / 9.30am / 11.30am & 6.30pm

WEEKDAY MASSES Monday to Friday at 9.15am

SATURDAY: 9.15am

THE HOLY HOUR of prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament takes place on a **Monday evening from 6.30 - 7.30pm**. and will be preceded by the **ROSARY for Ukraine and peace in our world at 6.10 p.m.**

PILGRIMS OF HOPE PRAYER GROUP - Why not join the parish Pilgrims of Hope prayer group? It couldn't be easier. The group pray **every Monday evening at 8.00pm**. Prayers and reflections are shared on a WhatsApp group with each person praying privately wherever they find themselves. If you'd like to join the WhatsApp group then please give your mobile number and name to the parish secretary.

SICK & HOUSEBOUND PARISHIONERS: If there are any sick or housebound parishioners that would like a visit from one of the priests please contact Clergy House Tel No: 01277 265 235. We can also arrange for Holy Communion to be brought to your homes on a regular basis.

THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK is available to anyone who is gravely ill or about to have an operation, so if you know someone who should receive this important sacrament then please speak to a member of the clergy or ring the parish office on 01277 265 235.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION is available in the Cathedral on Saturdays from 10.00 - 11.00am. Confessions in Italian are also offered.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR SICK and housebound parishioners and friends, including: Sylvia Allum, Merle Anderson, Suzie Anderson, Alistair Bailey, Yvonne Ball, Hermine Bayley, Heidi Brenke, Eda Bright, Roisin Cassels, Esmeralda Chester, Keith Chester, Dermot Dalton, David, Iris Davis, Patricia Decup, Sheila Deed, Margaret F, Rebecca Florendo, Angela Gavin, Brian Hodgkins, Deacon Nicholas Holmes, Wong Su Hwa, Jess, Lisa Landy, Suzie Law, Lawrence, Peter Madden, Romek Matyszczyk, Tony Maule, John McCarthy, Carmel Micallef, Stephanie Murray, Harry Newman, Barney O'Driscoll, Joe O'Herlihy, Liam O'Herlihy, Steven Poole, Margaret Ross, Geraldine Sheehan, Robin Shenton, David Spring, Mary Stretch, Tim, TCT, Siobhan Vaughan, Michael Wilson, Kalcho Yankov and all our sick.

JUST FOR INFORMATION: Clergy days off are Tuesday (Fr John) and Wednesday (Fr Matúš). If you need to contact them at these times, please leave a message and they will call you back when they are able.

LOURDES WITH OUR DIOCESE: Would you like to join our bishop and parishioners and clergy from around the diocese on our annual pilgrimage to Lourdes this summer? The dates are ***Friday, 17th - Friday, 24th July***. Please visit <https://tangney-tours.com/brentwood> for further information and to book, or contact Deirdre Pembroke, lourdes@brcdt.org if you have any questions. Paper booking forms to follow.

ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL: NURSERY OPENING

Our infant school is actively seeking support from the local community to resource its new nursery, ready for its opening in September 2026. The school now has an Amazon Wishlist which is solely dedicated to resourcing the nursery. If you would like to show your support to the exciting addition to our infant school and parish community, the link to the list is: https://www.amazon.co.uk/registries/gl/owner-view/CE4GY31VU4JM?ref_=gr_universal_landing_ggr

ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL: NURSERY APPLICATIONS 2026-27

The nursery admission round is now open for parents of children to apply for a nursery place for the academic year that starts in September 2026. The application form is available on the school website and applications must be made directly to the school. The closing date for applications is: ***Friday, 20th March 2026***.

THE CAFOD LENTEN WALK: You are invited to join the walk, which will take place every Sunday from ***22nd February*** until ***29th March***. Led by a volunteer from Love in Action, the group will be guided round various areas of Brentwood, at a leisurely pace, allowing the opportunity to meet more parish members (especially if you are new to the parish), but also to walk, talk and raise awareness of our neighbours in need of Life Saving Water.

We have been taking this walk for the past few years and would love more people to attend. We meet outside the Parish Hall after 9.30am Mass and each walk lasts approximately 1hr. Please do join us, even if you can only attend for one week and please come prepared with suitable clothing, in case of bad weather. Our parish is registered on the CAFOD website under 'Big Lent Walk'.

SVP AND CAFOD WORK EXPERIENCE - The St Vincent de Paul Society and CAFOD are working together to offer a week of free residential work experience for 20 young adults in England and Wales. The experience will run from **Sunday, 21st - Friday, 26th June** in London. Candidates must be aged 18-25 years old, but priority will be given to those in their first or second year at university. Application forms are available via the QR code and the deadline is **Monday, 6 April**. For any queries, please contact KeziaH@svp.org.uk



VACANCY - HEAD TEACHER, ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HORNCHURCH The Governors of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hornchurch, are seeking to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Head Teacher. Closing date: **Friday, 6th March 2026 at 5pm**. Interview Date: **Friday, 20th March 2026**. Enquiries can be made by email to admin@stmcps.co.uk, or phone 01708 448430.

BCCS AFTERNOON TEA - The Brentwood Catholic Children Society is delighted to kick off the year with an invitation to Afternoon Tea. Hosted in the opulent surroundings of the Roslin Beach Hotel in Southend-on-Sea on **Tuesday 17th February 2026 (13:30-15:30)**.

Tickets are £35 per person - for more information or to book your place search [//www.bccs.org.uk/get-involved/events/](http://www.bccs.org.uk/get-involved/events/) or contact Julie Abbott on 07912277413 or jabbott@bccs.org.uk

QR CODES and CONTACTLESS GIVING A new online donation system has been set up so that parishioners and visitors are now able to donate by using a QR code directly to the Parish; donations can be made either with or without gift aid using the QR codes below or by scanning those displayed around the Cathedral:



Please treat as gift aid donation, all qualifying gifts of money made from the date of this declaration. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that, if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Donate £3.00	Donate £5.00	Donate £10.00	Donate £20.00
			

Donate without Gifaid-it

If you are unable to donate with Gifaid-It then please use the codes below.

Donate £3.00	Donate £5.00	Donate £10.00	Donate £20.00
			