

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

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (A)

Sunday, 15 March 2026

Spiritual Reflection:

Every 5 seconds someone in the world goes blind. Every day 100 people in the UK start to lose their sight. Almost 2 million people in the UK are living with significant sight loss. Around 360,000 people in the UK are registered blind or partially sighted. An estimated 25,000 children in Britain are blind or partially sighted. In the UK 86% of people value their sight above any other sense.



Jesus' healing of the man born blind takes up the whole of John chapter 9. This remarkable miracle is a sign pointing to the mystery that Jesus is the Light of the World. We can divide the chapter into three parts: the first, the account of the miracle itself, the second, the investigating by the Pharisees, and finally the problem of spiritual blindness. We shall focus on the final part of the chapter, the problem of spiritual blindness.

It is said that there are none so blind as those who will not see. When someone doesn't understand our point of view or what we are trying to say we protest, 'You just don't see, do you?' What is seen is temporary,

but what is unseen it eternal and God wants us to see with eyes of faith. Perhaps the following story might help to explain this. A man once stood on a soapbox at Hyde Park Corner, pouring scorn on the Christian faith. A gifted orator, he mocked, 'People tell me that God exists, but I can't see him. People tell me that there is life after death, but I can't see it. People tell me that there is a heaven and a hell, but I can't see them.' The gathered crowd cheered and congratulated him, loud and effusive in their praise. Suddenly, a second man was helped onto the soapbox. He tottered on the fragile podium before collecting himself. He too was a gifted orator: 'People tell me that there is green grass all around me, but I can't see it. People tell me that there is a blue sky above, but I can't see it. People tell me that there are trees nearby, but I can't see them. You see, I'm blind.

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

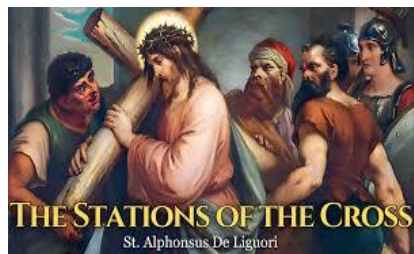
Today is 'Laetare Sunday', the word 'Laetare' means to 'Rejoice'. It marks the mid-way point of our Holy Lenten Season. This gives us all a wonderful opportunity to review our Lenten resolutions. If we have been remiss in our resolve to renew and improve our lives of faith, it's still not too late to make an extra special effort over the next few weeks of Lent. Obviously, this is a very personal journey that we make during this Lenten season. There is no one looking over our shoulder telling us what we should or shouldn't do. But personal self-discipline is very much at the heart of this Holy Season. Our Prayer, our fasting, our works of charity, our personal penance, all of these areas certainly help us on our spiritual journey to the Joy of Resurrection faith on Easter Day. To look forward in Rejoicing in the Lord Jesus is at the heart of our Liturgy today. Let us all really look forward to the remaining weeks of Lent as we anticipate the Joy of Easter!



MOTHERING SUNDAY: 15th March 2026. We would like to wish all our Mothers a very Happy Mothering Sunday this weekend. This is our opportunity to show our gratitude and love to our dear mums, for all they do, and are for us. Let us also remember our dear mothers who are now with God, in their lives they gave us so much love and guidance. May they rest in peace in heaven. We look to Our Blessed Lady, the Mother of Jesus as a wonderful model and example to all mothers. Children, please collect a Special Mother's Day Card for your mums.

AN EXTRA MASS EACH WEEK DURING LENT: The Eucharist is the 'source and summit' of the Christian Life. It is the most intimate expression of God's love for us by giving us the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, His Body & Blood, Soul & Divinity. There is no greater gift! I would like to invite all our parishioners to consider attending an extra Mass each week during the Holy Lenten Season. This can be an incredibly beautiful expression, not only of our love of the Lord, but an additional and positive discipline for Lent.

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY: To Bishop Alan Williams who will be 75 years of age on Sunday, 15th March. Bishop Alan will formally tender his resignation to the Holy Father on his Birthday. This is the normal protocol for Bishops who reach 75 years of age but he will stay in post until a new Bishop is appointed. Let us extend our warmest Birthday wishes to Bishop Alan and pray he has a wonderful day of celebration



STATIONS OF THE CROSS: Is the traditional devotion for the Lenten Season. It retraces the Lord Jesus' last day here on earth, from the condemnation by Pilate to the Crucifixion on the Hill of Calvary. It is a very moving journey, and we are invited to share the Lord through the 14

stations to remember his Passion and Death. If you have never been to the Stations before, please try to attend at least once during the Lenten Season. Stations of the Cross will be on ***Fridays at 7.00pm & Sundays at 5.00pm***. Parents, this is a wonderful way to instruct the children about the Passion of the Lord, why not attend as a family!

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF

ADULTS: As we rapidly approach the conclusion of the RCIA - Journey of Faith Programme for this year. I commend to your prayers our 5 Catechumens & 7 Candidates who will receive the Easter Sacraments at the Holy Saturday Easter Vigil on the 4th April this year. It's wonderful each year how people respond to the Almighty God and embark upon this incredible journey.



NEW RCIA PROGRAMME COMMENCING SEPTEMBER 2026: If anyone is interested in joining the new RCIA Programme commencing in September, please kindly speak to Fr John, Tel No: 01277 265 235. It is always good to have a large group of enquirers. It is a systematic programme, covering all areas of the Roman Catholic Faith. We use the Creed as the basis for

all instruction, and cover areas of the Old & New Testaments, Catholic Teaching and Tradition, The Sacraments, The Person of Jesus Christ, The Trinity, The Pascal Mystery, The role of Our Blessed Lady, The four last things, Sacramentals & the Saints, Catholic Moral Teaching, Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), How to Pray, Extensive Tour of the Church.

RCIA - JOURNEY OF FAITH: Thursday, 19th March 2026, we continue with the final few talks in this programme. The theme this week will be “The meaning of Holy Week” - explaining all the different aspects of Holy Week to our Catechumens and Candidates. On **Wednesday, 25th March at 7.00pm** we will have our final class in the Cathedral. This is when we have a fully in depth conducted tour of the Cathedral, explaining all the aspects of the Cathedral: History, structure and origin of the building of Churches, the Blessed Sacrament, the Altar & Ambo, the Bishop’s Cathedral, The Baptismal Font, The Stations of the Cross, The Priest’s Sacristy - The Sacred Vestments.

WHAT IS HOLY WEEK? This is truly the highpoint in the Church’s Liturgical Year. Commencing on Palm Sunday, where we remember the Lord’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem to the cries of Hosanna to the Son of David; the Parish Penitential; Service on **Tuesday, 31st March**; The Chrism Mass, with the Blessing of the three Sacred Oils, and where all the priests renew their Priestly Vows. The Sacred Triduum beginning on Holy Thursday with the beautiful Mass of the Last Supper, where we are reminded of Jesus’ service to others by the washing of feet, and the institution of the Most Holy Eucharist. Good Friday we celebrate the Solemn Passion of the Lord at **3.00pm**, the simplest of the Holy Week Services, the reading of St John’s Passion, the Veneration of the Cross, and the reception of Holy Communion. On Holy Saturday we will celebrate the first Mass of Resurrection at **7.30pm** - This beautiful Mass celebrates the whole of salvation history with the climax of Jesus’ triumph over sin and death. Please participate in as much of the Holy Week Services as you can.



PARISH LENTEN PENITENTIAL SERVICE - Tuesday, 31st March at 7.30pm: As Lent is a Penitential Season, the Church has always encouraged the faithful to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for Easter; this is known as fulfilling our Easter

duties. We have always taught that every Roman Catholic should celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year. We are all in need of God's loving mercy and forgiveness, that's why the Sacrament is so important. There will be several visiting priests to hear Confessions. If it's been a long time since you last went to Confession, please make a very special effort to celebrate the Sacrament, please don't be frightened, the priests will give you all the help you need. What greater act of love could we show to Jesus than being washed clean of our sins.

RETURNING TO THE PRACTICE OF THE

FAITH: The most wonderful thing about the life of faith, is that it is never too late to return to the practice of the faith. And practice means being present each week and participating in the Eucharistic Celebration.

As the great Catholic author Matthew Kelly said in his recent book 'Thirty-three days to Eucharistic Glory "Those who believe, don't leave!"' This Lent may be an opportunity for you to return to the practice of your faith. It is our faith that truly gives meaning to the whole journey of life itself. Please think about 'Coming Home.'



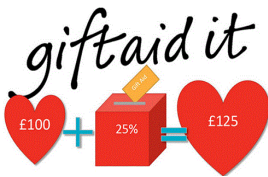
ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY: Please pray for Fr Matúš, who celebrated the second anniversary of his Ordination to the Sacred Priesthood on **Monday, 16th March**. We wish him a very happy day and Ad multos annos.



GET YOUR EASTER CHICKS: Some of the Mercy Sisters from St Joseph's Convent have been knitting some small Easter Chicks with a Cadbury's Cream Egg inside, these will be available next weekend at £2 each, which goes towards Church Funds. I would like to thank St Martina for organising this, and for the other sisters, for all their hard work in knitting these little chicks over the past weeks. Please pick one up for your child.

LENTEN LECTURES: Thank you to all those who attended the third of this year's Lenten Lectures given by Mauro Iannicelli. The final lecture will take place on **Wednesday, 18th March at 7.30pm** in the Parish Hall and will be given by Rev Msgr John Armitage. The theme of the talks this year is: **"What does it truly mean to be Catholic"**





PARISH GIFT AID SCHEME: Do you belong to the Parish Gift Aid Scheme? If you are a Taxpayer, and you make a weekly contribution to the Parish for its upkeep, you are entitled to join the scheme, we just need your name and address. Your weekly contribution can be made in various

ways, through the Offertory plate which goes around the Cathedral at each Mass, through a Standing Order, through the Swipe Card Machine in the Narthex, or by the QR codes. Obviously, you will need to notify the Gift Aid Organiser of which method you use so we can keep a record of your donations. The Gift Aid System affords us the opportunity to claim back 25% in the pound, from the Inland Revenue, which over a year can mount up to a considerable amount helping the parish funds. So, your contribution becomes tax deductible. As we approach the end of the Fiscal Tax Year, I would ask all parishioners to seriously consider your weekly offering, and, if you do not belong to the Gift Aid Scheme already, hope you will endeavour to do so. Michael & Amy Edwards are our Gift Aid Organisers; they will give you all the help you need. Always, my grateful thanks to each one of you as you make your Weekly Offertory to God for the upkeep of the parish.

REQUIEM MASS FOR:

- **ITA DOYLE** will take place in the Cathedral at **10.30am on Tuesday, 17th March**, followed by a burial at Barkingside Cemetery.

- **PATRICK FINBARR MURPHY** will take place in The Cathedral at **11.00am on Friday, 20 March** followed by cremation at Bentley Crematorium.

May God bless you all.

250 CLUB: Congratulations to our October, November and December winners - Simon and Jane Conrad (£50), Maureen Duane (£50), J & A Aragao (£300), Fiona East (£100) and Paul Redfearn (£100).

MISSIO If you have not yet returned your Missio box, could you please do so, before Easter Sunday, either to the narthex or Clergy House. Thank you.

LUNCHTIME MUSIC RECITAL: We look forward to welcoming Karpediem to The Cathedral at **1.00pm on Wednesday, 18 March** for a recital of folk and Celtic music. Refreshments in the Song School afterwards. Please do join us.

FOOD BANK: Next Food Bank collection will be next weekend - **21st/22nd March**. Please donate food items, toiletries, cleaning materials and especially Easter treats. If you are a Tax payer and give cash or a cheque, please consider signing up to the Foodbank Gift Aid (separate from cathedral Gift Aid) forms available by the collection box. Thank you for your generosity.

PEMBROKE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE MUSIC FOR LENT: *Saturday, 21st March at 7.30pm*. We are very fortunate to welcome this outstanding Choral Concert to The Cathedral. The Programme includes the famous Allegri Miserere, Mendelssohn's Hear My Prayer (including O for the Wings of a Dove) and the wonderful Finzi Marsh and Bernstein pieces. Tickets are £20.00 and available via the QR code.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR CHILDREN'S LITURGY GROUP TEAM - The Children's Liturgy group would be pleased to welcome new team members to join the rota to help lead the Liturgy for the children at the 9.30am Mass. No advance preparation is required, as each week's liturgy is prepared by the team leader. Team members play an important role in keeping the children safe, leading by example and encouraging them to take an active part in the group. This voluntary role requires an enhanced DBS check. If you are able to help and would like to know more, please contact Jane Davenport, via Clergy House.

THE CAFOD LENTEN WALK: Continues this Sunday after 9.30am Mass. We meet outside the Parish Hall 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'.

COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS TODAY: will be hosted by the Confirmation Group. Next week will be the turn of the Brownies. 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.

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

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 details to the parish secretary.

SICK & HOUSEBOUND PARISHIONERS: If there are any sick of 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.**

MARTÍN PALMERI'S 'MAGNIFICAT' - Please join us for Brentwood & Ingatestone Choral Society's performance of Martín Palmeri's 'Magnificat'

conducted by Art Wangcharoensab. This is the UK premiere of this fantastic tango-inspired choral piece and the composer himself will be at the piano! **Saturday, 28th March, 7.00pm** in The Wessex Auditorium, Brentwood School. Tickets are available via the website: <https://www.brentwoodandingatestonechoral.org.uk/tickets/>

PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK SHRINE & CO. MAYO LED BY BISHOP ALAN WILLIAMS - Monday, 15th June 2026 to Friday, 19th June 2026. 4 nights in Knock House Hotel, with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. Visit Kylemore Abbey, Croagh Patrick, Ballintubber Abbey, Fr. Peyton Centre. Price of £799.00 per person. The package includes: Return flight from London Stansted, 10kg check in bag, 4 nights Dinner, B&B in Knock House Hotel, all entertainment, excursions and guided tours. Assistance from Knock Pilgrimages representative. Single room supplement £250.00. Maximum 3. Contact: Patricia on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175 557 or at knockpilgrimages@gmail.com

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.

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**.

VACANCIES:

CLASS TEACHER - ST ANTONY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, WOODFORD GREEN Deadline: **12:00 noon Thursday, 19th March 2026**

DEPUTY HEADTEACHER - OUR LADY IMMACULATE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, CHELMSFORD Deadline: **12:00 noon Friday, 20th March 2026**

EARLY YEARS PRACTITIONER - ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL: We are seeking to appoint an enthusiastic and well-motivated person to join our staff in September 2026 to work in our new School-Based Nursery. 8.15am - 3.10pm (term-time only). Please contact the school office for further information and an application pack: office@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk Deadline: **Friday, 24th April 2026**

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 Giftaid-it

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

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