

The Parish of St Josephine Bakhita

The Churches of English Martyrs & St Robert Bellarmine

3rd Sunday of Lent

Sunday 23rd March 2025



Parish Priest:

Very Rev Canon Mark B Madden KCHS FRSA

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Looking at this Jubilee Year of Hope from God's perspective, what can I do during the week ahead to justify God's hope in me?

JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE - 8-15 September 2025

Places are still available for the Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome, San Giovanni & Assisi, Monday 8 September - Monday 15 September 2025. Fr Mark and the Pilgrimage Company have now finalised the last remaining details of the flights:

Monday 8 September

10:15 am depart Manchester on Ryanair

13:55 pm arrive Rome

Monday 15 September

21:30 pm depart Rome on Ryanair

23:30 pm arrive Manchester

The timing of the flights is excellent, as it gives us more time in Rome on our arrival day and a full day before we depart for home.

The final total cost of the trip is £1588.

If anyone one is interested in booking, you need to take a booking form from the parish office as soon as possible, complete it and bring it back



SUNDAY THOUGHTS

The two tragic events that Jesus addresses in the Gospel are quite disturbing. It appears that they were well known, as Jesus seems to be familiar with the first and refers to the second without initially describing it. These mass deaths presumably left a lasting impression, as Luke seems to assume his audience may recall them as well. Jesus uses these horrible tragedies to teach the people who have come to him that it was not the sinfulness of those at Siloam or in Galilee that brought about their deaths. “By no means!” No, it is that because they died suddenly and unexpectedly, they had no chance to repent of their sins. Those who hear Jesus’ words (including us today) are given that chance. We have the wonderful opportunity to repent of our sins and return to God with clean hearts.

If it wasn’t enough that sometimes Jesus’ parables are difficult to interpret, today we hear one that doesn’t even have a proper ending. What happened that next year? Did the fig tree bear fruit? Did the owner cut it down? Evidently Jesus’ point did not hinge on whether the fig tree eventually blossomed or not. Perhaps Jesus was trying to tell the people that God was always willing to give us another chance, but that we must make the most of it before it’s too late. The telling of the parable was occasioned by the shocking sudden death of dozens of souls. They had not had time to repent. Every single person who hears the parable does. Every single person who hears the parable can yet bear fruit.

Fasting, praying, and almsgiving. How are we doing at performing the traditional Lenten disciplines? Have they already begun to bear fruit, to make us aware of our dependence on God, to bring us into conversation with God, to give of our plenty and ourselves to those in need? Or are we the fig tree, needing a final chance from a merciful God? Let us heed the warning implicit in the first part of the Gospel, as well as the warning from Saint Paul, that even those who were baptised and shared in the spiritual food and drink in the desert (akin to the Eucharist) could be struck down by God.

CATHOLIC PIC

March edition is now available. The main feature this month is Fr Mark’s recent meetings in the Holy Land.



Masses & Services for the coming week

DATE	English Martyrs	St Robert Bellarmine
Sunday 23rd March <i>Third Sunday of Lent</i>	9.30am People of the Parish	11.00am - Ann & Dave Mardell
Monday 24th March	10.00am Terry Ryan 1.00pm Funeral service Alfred Murray	
Tuesday 25th March		10.00am Doreen & Eddie Hughes
Wednesday 26th March	NO MASS	NO MASS
Thursday 27th March	10.00am Gray family	
Friday 28th March		10.00am Christopher Duckett
Saturday 29th March	12.00pm Baptisms Jude Threlfall Maya & Poppy Sinclair	NO MASS
Sunday 30th March <i>Fourth Sunday of Lent</i> <i>Laetare Sunday</i>	9.30am Margaret Willcox	11.00am - People of the Parish



SANCTUARY LAMPS

The Sanctuary Lamps for the coming week are for:

Frank Williams - English Martyrs

Anthony & Mary Teresa Hulme - St Robert's



SANTA MARTA GROUP

The Santa Marta Group is a International Group hoping to be a catalyst to bring systemic change to end human trafficking and modern-day slavery by bringing together leaders from civil society, law enforcement, business, faiths and communities.

Fr Mark would like to form a new parish Group that will work specifically with the Santa Marta Group, Caritas, Civic authorities etc. to highlight the work of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. We will officially launch the group and its work on Sunday 8th February 2026. If you are willing to join, please give your name to the parish offices.

A PRAYER FOR POPE FRANCIS

O merciful Father, You have called Your servant Pope Francis to shepherd Your Church with faith and love. In his time of need, we turn to You, the Divine Physician, and humbly ask that You extend Your healing hand upon him. Grant him strength in body, mind, and spirit, so that he may continue to lead Your people with steadfast devotion. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, we place him under Your loving care, trusting in Your divine will.



We ask this in the name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Fr Mark is often available in the 20 minutes before each Mass to hear reconciliations. Please pop into the sacristy to ask.



VISITATION OF THE CENTENARY PILGRIM VIRGIN STATUE OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY AND THE RELICS OF SAINTS JACINTA AND FRANCISCO – Monday 2 June 2025

The Statue and Relics will be visiting the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King on Monday 2 June 2025. On the day, there will be enthronement & crowning of the Statue, Holy Mass, act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, enrolment & investiture of the Brown Scapular, Fatima devotions, veneration of the Relics of Saints Jacinta & Francisco, Fatima talk & film, recitation & meditation of the Holy Rosary Mysteries, etc. For enquiry, please contact the World Apostolate of Fatima at 07788 473210.

IRENAEUS: COME AND SEE, 'The Wonder of Being Human', Saturday 5 April 2025, 10.30–16.00

Keynote speaker: Timothy Radcliffe. Suggested donation of £10. A packed lunch is advised. For more information email: jenny@irenaeus.co.uk or call: 0151 949 1199.

LENTEN ALMS

Lent is the ideal time to do a little bit more in remembering the needy. The call of Christians to charity is a frequent theme of the Gospels. During Lent, we are asked to focus more intently on "**almsgiving**," which means donating money or goods to the poor and performing other acts of charity. As one of the three pillars of Lenten practice, almsgiving, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says is, *a witness to fraternal charity!* and *"a work of justice pleasing to God."*

A box for financial donations will be available at all Masses during Lent for you to make a contribution. This money is sent to the Diocese and the Archbishop decides on a cause for this to be sent as a Diocesan donation. You can also help in donating items for our local Food Bank which we regularly support and will be greatly appreciated. Items for food can be left at the back of church.



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

This popular Lenten devotion will be celebrated at English Martyrs on Sunday at 4 pm and next Friday at St. Robert Bellarmine after the 10.00 a.m. Mass.

FR MARK'S THEATRE GROUP

It's beginning to feel a bit like Spring so let's come out of 'hibernation' We have theatre trip arranged:



Saturday 14 June Liverpool Philharmonic - 'A Night at the Musicals'

'Orchestra and leading West End vocalists bring the musical hits right here to Hope Street. Packed with your favourite songs from Hamilton, Six, The Book of Mormon, Frozen, Aladdin, Mamma Mia!, Grease, The Lion King, The Phantom of the Opera and Les Misérables, expect showbiz glamour and knockout tunes.' Cost for this one is **£53**. Name and deposit to office before end of April please

CATHEDRAL WALK

Saturday 12 April, 10:15am

PLACE: Shakespeare North Playhouse, Prescot

DETAILS: The next cathedral walk is scheduled for Saturday 12th April meeting at Shakespeare North Playhouse, Prescot and walking to Blessed Dominic Shrine, Sutton.



The Shrine is one of the designated churches for our Archdiocese in our jubilee year. The shrine will be open in the afternoon and facilities will be open at the church club. The walk will take around 3 to 4 hours and whilst largely urban will take in Shirley park in St Helens. It will give walkers the chance to see the new theatre and jubilee shrine, meeting at 10.15am at Shakespeare North, not far from Prescot station. CONTACT: Mike, 0796 954 3983 for further details.

FEAST OF THE WEEK

The Annunciation of the Lord



The question may strike you as irreverent. How dare I suggest that the Blessed Virgin Mary, could have said 'no' to the Angel. Could she have said No? You might say that of course she couldn't, she was far too holy - but you would be guilty of demeaning and dangerous sentimentality. It is demeaning because it turns Our Lady from a free human being into a sanctified automaton. The whole glory of the Annunciation is that Mary could have said No to God but she said Yes instead. That is what we celebrate, that is what we praise her for; and rightly so.

This sentimental view is dangerous too. If we believe that the most important decision in the history of the world was in fact inevitable, that it couldn't have been otherwise, then that means it was effortless. Now we have a marvellous excuse for laziness. Next time we're faced with a tough moral decision, we needn't worry about doing what is right. Just drift, and God will make sure that whatever choice we make is the right one. If God really wants us to do something he'll sweep us off our feet the way he did Mary, and if he chooses not to, it's hardly our fault, is it?

So Mary could have said No to Gabriel. What if she had? He couldn't just go and ask someone else, like some sort of charity collector. With all the genealogies and prophecies in the Bible, there was only one candidate. It's an alarming thought. Ultimately, of course, God would have done something: the history of salvation is the history of him never abandoning his people.

Faced with the enormity of her choice, how was Mary able to decide? If she said No, unredeemed generations would toil on under the burden of sin. If she said Yes, she herself would suffer, and so would her Son; but both would be glorified. Millions of people not yet born would have Heaven open to them; but millions of others would suffer oppression and death in her son's name. The stakes were almost infinite.

You might say that Mary didn't worry about all this, just obeyed God; but I don't believe it. What God wanted was not Mary's unthinking obedience but her full and informed consent as the representative of the entire human race. The two greatest miracles of the Annunciation are these: that God gave Mary the wisdom to know the consequences of her decision, and that he gave her the grace not to be overwhelmed by that knowledge.

When we come to an important decision in our lives, we can easily find our minds clouded by the possible consequences, or, even more, by partial knowledge of them. How can we ever move, when there is so much good and evil whichever way we go? The Annunciation gives us the answer. God's grace will give us the strength to move, even if the fate of the whole world is hanging in the balance. After all, God does not demand that our decisions should be the correct ones (assuming that there even is such a thing), only that they should be rightly made.

POPE FRANCIS PRAYER INTENTION FOR MARCH

For families in crisis

Let us pray that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness, rediscovering each other's gifts, even in their differences. .

Lord in your mercy...



JUBILEE PRAYER

During this Jubilee Year, we encourage you to pray the Jubilee Prayer each day:

Father in heaven, may the faith you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.

May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever.

Amen



CARE NOT KILLING

Please consider signing the Care Not Killing petition which calls on MPs to vote against legalising assisted suicide in England and Wales.

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill would make vulnerable people - including the elderly and disabled - feel a burden on family or carers resulting in pressure to end their lives. Please visit: www.carenotkilling.org.uk for the online petition. Our own MP voted for the Bill when it was last debated in Parliament!

In April or May, MPs will again vote on the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. Despite a disappointing initial vote of 330-275 in favour, there is now a realistic chance the Bill can be defeated. The Independent newspaper reports that 142 MPs who initially backed the Bill could withdraw their support. **NOW** is the time for Catholics to make their voices heard.

If assisted suicide becomes law in England & Wales:

1. Hospice [and palliative care] provision will be undermined
2. Suicide prevention efforts will be weakened
3. Elderly and disabled people will feel pressure to take their own lives*

In the US state of Oregon, almost half of those who have died by assisted suicide cited fear of being a burden on their families or carers as a reason for choosing to die. Only 1-in-3 people cite fear of pain.

Jesus Youth "Way of the Cross" Procession through Liverpool City Centre - Saturday 12 April 2025

Jesus Youth Liverpool will be hosting a "Way of the Cross" procession through Liverpool City Centre on Saturday at 1pm. The journey will begin at the Blessed Sacrament Shine and will reach the Metropolitan Cathedral, concluding with a blessing from Archbishop Malcolm McMahon. All are welcome to join.

Jesus Youth is an international Catholic movement dedicated to deepening the faith of young people and families, encouraging them to live out the Gospel in their daily lives. Through prayer, sacraments, and acts of service, they strive to strengthen the spiritual fabric of our communities.

**THROUGH THE EYES OF THOSE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS:
EASTER RETREAT, Wednesday 16 – Sunday 20 April**

Led by Fr Chris Thomas and the Irenaeus team, following the Easter Triduum services, beginning with a Passover meal on the Wednesday. Limited residential places available. To book and for more information contact jenny@irenaeus.co.uk

**CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY NETWORK CONFERENCE 2025,
Saturday 26 April**

Led by Rev Lister Tonge at the Irenaeus Centre, L22 1RD. 10:30-16:00 **Conference Fees:** £30 / CSN members £25 - £5 early bird discount until **14th March 2025**. Bookings: catholicspiritualitynetwork@gmail.com , www.csnretreats.org.uk/conference.php

NUGENT CARE

Nugent are a not-for-profit organisation based in the Archdiocese of Liverpool, established since 1881. We have a proven history of adapting what we do to meet the needs of the communities we serve. As a leading voice in the care sector, we look to improve health, opportunity, quality of life, and levels of achievement, whilst reducing poverty and increasing safety for all.

We operate across the North West, predominantly in the Liverpool City region, offering a diverse range of support for adults and children. Our children's provisions include residential homes, a secure facility, a step-down home and SEMH School. Our adult's provisions include dispersed homelessness accommodation, floating support provided in the community and supported living provided at home. We also provide adult residential homes including a specialist acquired brain injury, a home for those living with dementia, and a home supporting Mental Health needs. We also offer adoption support services working in partnership with local authorities across the UK.

To reach communities beyond these provisions we have established an initiative called Our Future Now, which actively engages in a range of fundraising and community-based activities. These efforts support wider unmet needs across the Liverpool City Region and beyond.

The annual retiring collection for Nugent Care will take place next weekend. Please give generously.



English Martyrs Office:	0151 928 3471	englishmartyrs@rcaol.org.uk
School Lane, Litherland. L21 7LX	Office hours: Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri	9.30am–2.30pm
St Robert Bellarmine Office:	0151 922 1352	strobert@rcaol.org.uk
Orrell Road, Bootle. L20 6DZ	Office hours: Tues, Wed, Fri	9.30am–1.30pm

liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/privacynotice
Archdiocese of Liverpool: CIO no:1199714