

## Pope Leo XIV: Lent as a time of conversion

The Holy Father Pope Leo XIV has issued

his message for Lent 2026 on the theme:

“Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion”.

**Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion**

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

### Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through listening. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (Ex 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as he does. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.”

### Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, fasting is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance ...

To read more: [Pope Leo XIV: Lent as a time of conversion - Catholic Bishops' Conference](#)



## Affair of the Heart



In today's Liturgy, destiny of the human race is told as the tale of two “types” of men—the first man, Adam, and the new Adam, Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–22; 45–59).

Paul's argument in the Epistle is built on a series of contrasts between “one” or “one person” and “the many” or “all.” By one person's disobedience, sin and condemnation entered the world, and death came to reign over all. By the obedience of another one, grace abounded, all were justified, and life came to reign for all.

This is the drama that unfolds in today's First Reading and Gospel.

Formed from the clay of the ground and filled with the breath of God's own Spirit, Adam was a son of God (see Luke 3:38), created in His image (see Genesis 5:1–3). Crowned with glory, he was given dominion over the world and the protection of His angels (see Psalms 8:6–8; 91:11–13). He was made to worship God—to live not by bread alone but in obedience to every word that comes from the mouth of the Father.

Adam, however, put the Lord his God to the test. He gave in to the serpent's temptation, trying to seize for himself all that God had already promised him. But in His hour of temptation, Jesus prevailed where Adam failed—and drove the devil away.

Still, we sin after the pattern of Adam's transgression. Like Adam, we let sin in the door (see Genesis 4:7) when we entertain doubts about God's promises, when we forget to call on Him in our hours of temptation.

But the grace won for us by Christ's obedience means that sin is no longer our master.

As we begin this season of repentance, we can be confident in His compassion, that He will create in us a new heart (see Romans 5:5; Hebrews 8:10). As we do in today's Psalm, we can sing joyfully of our salvation, renewed in His presence.

Scott Hahn



English Martyrs  
Vale of White Horse  
Pastoral Area

PARISHES OF  
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ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, Wallingford

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## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR A — WEEK 1

### Entrance Antiphon:

When he calls on me, I will answer him;  
I will deliver him and give him glory,  
I will grant him length of days.

**First Reading:** Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

**Responsorial Psalm:** Ps 51

Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

**Second Reading:** Romans 5:12-19

### Gospel Acclamation:

**Glory and praise to you, O Christ.**

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

**Glory and praise to you, O Christ.**

**Gospel:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Communion Antiphon:** Mt 4:4

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

### SATURDAY 21st February

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... **Confession after Mass**

4:30 pm Adoration and Confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Patience Erhabor (Judith Montford)

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

### SUNDAY 22nd February ... FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford ... Clifford Family RIP (Noel Clifford)

2:00 pm Baptism ... Olutomilola Oloyede ... English Martyrs Didcot

### MONDAY 23rd February ... NO MASS

### TUESDAY 24th February

6:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:30 am Stations of the Cross St John Wallingford

12:00 noon Mass St John Wallingford ... Kevin Keeley RIP (Helen & Paul Fletcher)

12:00 noon Funeral ... Joan Russell ... English Martyrs Didcot

### WEDNESDAY 25th February

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

### THURSDAY 26th February

6:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

9:30 am Mass St John Wallingford

### FRIDAY 27th February

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:00 pm Stations of the Cross English Martyrs Didcot

### SATURDAY 28th February

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... **Confession after Mass**

4:30 pm Adoration and Confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

### SUNDAY 1st March ... SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford

2:00 pm Baptism ... Isabella Barnett ... English Martyrs Didcot

In your prayers, please remember: Margaret O'Conner, Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, Annie Furlong, Canon Peter Turbitt, Charles Hunt and all the sick and housebound.



## DEATH/FUNERAL NOTICE

**Joan Russell RIP** ... Funeral Service at 12noon, Tuesday 24th February, English Martyrs Didcot.



## Baptism

**W**e rejoice with the parents and godparents of Olutomilola Oloyede, who through the sacrament of Baptism, will become a member of the body of Christ this Sunday, and the parents of Isabella Bernett, who will become another new member of us through her baptism next Sunday. In your prayers, remember Olutomilola Oloyede and Isabella Bernett. We invoke God's blessings on them as they grow.



## A Calling to the Diaconate?

**F**r Dominic Adeiza asks men to consider whether they are being called to the Diaconate ... Have you ever wondered what the Diaconate is all about but something has held you back from finding out more about it? Is there a little voice in your head, that can't be silenced? If that's YOU, why not 'Come and See' for yourself without committing to anything further? We'll be holding an information event on **Saturday 28th March** at The English Martyrs Church, Didcot from **9am – 3pm** where you'll get to hear first hand, from those who are involved and what it's been like for them. You've got nothing to lose! If you'd like to attend, please call Pam on 07883 059529 to book a space and to help with catering requirements, or if you can't make it on the day, but would like to know more, please still get in touch on the above number, or email [diaconate@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:diaconate@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk).



## Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2026

**A**ware of the sick within our Diocese and of the sickness that afflicts our world today, Bishop Philip invites you to join him on this year's pilgrimage to Lourdes from Monday 6th July until Friday 10th July. Our pilgrimage will take place from Monday 6th July when we gather at Heathrow airport for a morning flight to France and end when we return to Heathrow on Friday 10th July. Our pilgrimage will follow a full program of events led by Bishop and Canon Smith including visits to places of importance to St. Bernadette, the Torchlight and Blessed Sacrament Processions, International Mass and opportunities to receive the Sacraments of the Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation, as well as take of the water as Mary instructed. To find out more and to book a place please email [lourdes@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:lourdes@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk), telephone 07780 221686 or write to Canon PJ Smith at St. Edmunds House, Bishop Crispian Way, Portsmouth PO1 3QA. [Click here](#) for a booking form.



## Registration For All Parishioners on New Online Portal -- ChurchSuite

**W**e would like to invite all our parishioners in Didcot and Wallingford to register or re-register with us on ChurchSuite. The online registration process is simple and quick. For adults parishioners [click here](#) to register. To register children in your family, [click here](#). Or you may simply scan the QR code which will take you directly to the online registration form. (Links and QR Codes can also be accessed from our [parish website](#)).

Weekly Newsletter will be emailed to you if you give us your consents to receive newsletters by email in your registration on the new platform. As members of the parish, you will be on our record and allow us to stay in touch with you and your family when you register with us. If you have problems in your online registration, please contact the [Parish Office](#) for support. Thank you.



## Parish Safeguarding

Our Safety Officer for all adults and children safeguarding issues is Stefania Harford. Please contact Stefania via the parish office on 01235 812338. If there is no response and in an emergency, dial 999.

## CAFOD Lent Family Fast Day

**L**ent Family Fast Day is on **Friday 27th February**. This Lent, live out the Gospel call to love your neighbour. By fasting and giving what you save, you join in Christ's compassion and help another family put food on the table. Your donation can help families around the world grow food in difficult conditions – such as on flood-resistant floating gardens or using solar-powered water pumps in times of drought. Collect a CAFOD envelope to bless others with your support or donate online at [cafod.org.uk/envelope](http://cafod.org.uk/envelope). There will be an appeal to highlight this year's campaign on Saturday evening mass on 21st in Wallingford and Sunday masses on 22nd February in Didcot and Wallingford.



## Lent 2026 at Didcot and Wallingford

**D**uring Lent, there will be Stations of the Cross every **Tuesday 11:30am** in Wallingford and every **Friday 6pm** in Didcot. In Didcot, there will be **Early Mass** every Tuesday and Thursday at **6:30am**, followed by breakfast served in the Tearoom. Easter Confession will be on **Tuesday 24th March at 7pm** in Didcot. For more information of all the activities this Lent, please refer to the 2026 Lent and Easter Flyer.



## Parking for Sunday Masses in Didcot

**D**ue to the current wet weather that we are experiencing, our car park ground has consistently become muddy and difficult to park on. We would like to encourage parishioners to park at Didcot Girls' School Car Park when you come to mass on Sunday in Didcot. The School Car Park is opened for our use on Sunday mornings between 8:30am to 11am. There are about 30 parking spaces available in the parking area on the left of the entrance driveway. Please do not park in the area directly in front of the school office (entrance right). Thank you.



## We Dare to Ask – A Lent Course at English Martyrs Didcot

**A**t English Martyrs Didcot, for the next 4 Wednesdays: **25th February, 4th, 11th and 18th March**, we are following the [We Dare to Ask](#) – the Lent resource prepared by Director of Mission at Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, in a Lent-only weekly gathering. Join us in the Tearoom every Wednesday at 7:30pm. Please contact [Nick Spencer 07870 505520](mailto:Nick.Spencer@emdidcot.org.uk) if you would like further information.



## World Day of Prayer Service

**T**he World Day of Prayer service this year is on **Friday 6th March**. The prayers are written by the women of Nigeria. The Wallingford group of churches service this year will be held at St Agatha's Church in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell at 3.00pm on 6th March. All are welcome to attend - men & women. The theme is "I will give you rest, come". Refreshments will be available after the service. For any queries, please contact Cecilia Wheeler, [ceswheeler@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ceswheeler@yahoo.co.uk).



## Canon Peter Turbitt

**C**anon Peter would like to thank everyone in Didcot and Wallingford for your prayers and thoughtful greeting cards. Canon's health conditions would demand him to rest quietly and take his time to gradually recover. He would like to request that there be NO VISITS until he is ready to announce his recovery. Therefore, as Fr Dominic had said last Sunday, let us all continue to offer our prayers and thoughts for him but refrain from any visits that might cause Canon Peter and his carers any distress during his recovery. Thank you.

## English Martyrs Gospel Reading Group February Meeting

**T**he Small Group is meeting on Tuesday 24th February at 7:30pm in the Tearoom to read and reflect on the coming Sunday's Gospel. Please come and join us. Contact Nick Spencer at 07870 505520.