



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT **SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2023**

Through Lent towards Heaven

A rich man who had also been a powerful local politician suddenly died of a massive heart attack. People had known him to be very ambitious, corrupt and cruel. Feeling relieved that at last he was gone, the whole town attended the final send off. As the long funeral procession was inching towards the cemetery an old truck full of firewood and coal somehow hurriedly attached itself right at the middle of the procession by accident. As it was going in the same direction, now it began patiently following the dead man's body. Suddenly noticing how weird it looked people started laughing. "Isn't it too much? We know that he is going straight to hell, but we never knew that one has to carry the fuel too along with him", they mused.

Whether accompanied by enough fuel for the awaiting hell fire or going there without it, nobody would want to go to hell. If it's so, why should anyone be willing to lead a life that feels like hell here and now already? That is why the essential call of this season of Lent to each of us is towards making a radical course correctio- metanoia. If we are mindlessly rushing now in the direction of a way of being that feels like hell, one needs to make all the efforts possible to free oneself from that sense of relentless dissatisfaction and misery which could be better identified as angst or dukkha.

With the profound words "Repent and Believe in the Gospel", we are invited to turn towards values and attitudes that could ensure that we would yield to God's grace and the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit; thus, gaining entry into the joy and peace of the Kingdom of Heaven than the misery of Hell.

Moved by similar concerns, in his homily during the Mass on Ash Wednesday, Pope Francis explained that the imposition of ashes on our foreheads at the beginning of every Lent symbolized the beginning of our "return journey" to God. He also further elaborated that this imposition is also a call both to return to the deeper truth about ourselves and also truly turn in love towards our brothers and sisters. He urged the faithful to use the Lent as the time of grace to put aside materialism and self-centeredness and radically shift towards helping others in need.

The Pope noted, "Jesus warns us that rather than mere external rites, these must be actions expressing the renewal of our hearts... All too often, our gestures and rites have no impact on our lives, but remain superficial." He expressed his deep concern that our almsgiving, prayer, and fasting should not amount to simple outward displays, but truly express outwardly what we are already in our interiority: the precious Children of God, and

so are Brothers and Sisters to one another in Christ. Pope Francis concluded his homily with the exhortation to “bow our heads, receive the ashes, and lighten our hearts,” in order to set forth on the paths of charity, prayer, and fasting. “Let us not neglect the grace of this holy season,” he said, “but fix our gaze on the Cross and set out, responding generously to the powerful promptings of Lent... At the end of the journey, we will encounter with greater joy and peace the Lord of life, who alone can raise us up from our ashes.”

It is by mindfully dropping 1) our short-sighted presumption of self-sufficiency, 2) all forms of idolatry of self, 3) our own egoistic tendency towards greed and envy, (precisely the three-fold deathly fuel/coal our minds use for turning our day-to-day normal life into a burning hell) we can begin to move away from our unbearable isolation, suffering and despair and even effortlessly enter the Kingdom of God. Thus, we further confirm our own inner conviction and optimism that our life, by its very nature, is constituted by its inseparable bond with the grace of God. In this way we can always fully revive and renew this relationship thanks to the sacramental means that has been generously put at our side.

During this Lent, let us, therefore, learn to discover that the so-called timeless ‘forever’ is composed of nothing but the ‘graceful now’, meant to be lived selflessly, spontaneously and joyfully. Perhaps, heaven is another symbol pointing to that new way of being happily Human each moment in the Divine presence.

First Sunday of Lent Sunday 26th February (Cycle A)

Parish Diary

Sunday Masses	10.00 am & 6.30 pm
Weekday Masses	9.00 am
Wednesdays	9.00 am – Eucharistic Service – Office Closed
Friday	Adoration following 9.00 am Mass
Holy Days of Obligation	9.30am & 7.30pm
Confessions	Saturdays 9.30 am - 10.00 am
Legion of Mary	After Sunday morning mass (11.30 am onwards)
Baptisms	By Appointment (Saturdays 12.00 pm - 12.30 pm)

Liturgical Calendar

Sunday 26 th February	First Sunday of Lent (A)
Wednesday 1 st March	St David, Bishop, Patron of Wales – National Feast
Sunday 5 th March	Second Sunday of Lent (A)

Masses & Intentions This Week

Sunday 26 th February	10.00 am	Rosaleen Grimwood RIP (donor – Pauline Guidera)
	6.30 pm	For Parishioners
Monday 27 th February	9.00 am	Eucharistic Service
Tuesday 28 th February	9.00 am	Eucharistic Service
Wednesday 1 st March	9.00 am	Eucharistic Service
Thursday 2 nd March	9.00 am	Eucharistic Service
Friday 3 rd March	11.00 am	Funeral – Mary Thurgood RIP
	7.00 pm	Stations of the Cross followed by mass
Saturday 4 th March	9.00 am	Agatha Linton – RIP/Anniversary (donor – Daphne Thomas & Family)
Sunday 5 th March	10.00 am	Mary Thurgood RIP (donor – Scully/Soares Families)

Fr Britto – Birthday Intentions
10/12.30 First Holy Communion Children - Hall
6.30 pm For Parishioners

The Season of Lent

Fridays in Lent

During the Season of Lent, we will have Friday morning mass at 9am and evening mass with Stations of the Cross beginning at 7.30pm. All are warmly encouraged to participate in this traditional practise.

Parish Notice Board

Sacristy Keys

If anyone has a set of keys that they are not currently using, please either give to Father or post through the Presbytery letterbox.

2nd Collection

Next week's second collection is for Lent Fast Day (Friday 3rd March). Your generosity as always is much appreciated.

Office Closure

Father will be away from Monday 27th February to Thursday 2nd March, inclusive. The office will be closed all day on Monday 27th. Father will be back on Friday 3rd March.

Painting of the Church Ceiling – No Weekday Masses

Following on from the voluntary help we received to paint the church, we would now like to complete the painting of the ceiling professionally. We would therefore ask for your kind help to contribute to the cost (£4,500-£5,000). Kindly meet Father personally to discuss your donation.

Works will commence for the completion of the church ceiling on Monday 27th February. During the days of work there will not be weekday masses in the church over a two week period. Kindly follow the Mass diary above for the change of program.

Children's Liturgy

The Children's Liturgy is now up and running during 10am mass every Sunday. Please encourage your children to join this group which is open to children aged 4 and above. It is a very relaxed and fun group to help your child along their path of faith.

Let us pray together for the people of Turkey and Syria who have been hard hit by the earthquakes. May we continue to pray for those who have lost their lives, as well as the injured, family members and rescuers. May our concrete aid sustain them in the midst of this appalling tragedy. Amen

Parish Finance:

Weekly Collection

The collection for 19.2.23 is as follows:

Main collection: (Gift Aid: £59, Loose plate: £198.33) Total: £257.33

Communication Desk

Caritas

“Caritas Diocese of Brentwood are inviting people of all ages to collect items throughout Lent, by following our Lenten Giving Calendar. All the items you collect can be placed into a container, topped with an Easter Egg, and then donated to your local foodbank before Easter Sunday. All information, including the calendar itself, can be found at www.caritasbrentwood.org/lent or by emailing caritas@dioceseofbrentwood.org”

CAFOD Family Fast Day – Lent Appeal

This Lent, your donations to CAFOD’s Family Fast Day Appeal will help families fighting the climate crisis and ensure that our Church network can quickly respond to emergencies, like the recent earthquake in Syria and Turkey. Give today using the envelope or at cafod.org.uk/give and please join us in praying for CAFOD’s development and emergency response work all over the world.

The Divine Mercy Apostolate, London

Is holding a Divine Mercy Lenten Retreat on Saturday 25 March 2023 from 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm at St Mary Mother of God, 213 Hornchurch Road, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 4TF

The Retreat will include teachings on the Message of Mercy, Stations of the Cross, Holy Mass, Hour of Mercy with Adoration and Benediction and Veneration of the Image of Merciful Jesus. All Welcome. Please call Millie on 07957594646 for more information

Lent Mass Readings

All the readings for the Masses of Lent, with a short commentary by Fr Adrian Graffy, can be found on www.whatgoodnews.org Click on ‘Scripture Readings’ and then ‘Lent Readings’.

Please Pray for the Sick and Housebound in our Parish:

John Buckley, Maureen Chaliss, Anna Heneghan, Brenda Humphreys, Pat Lark, George Malaj, Margaret, Eileen McCaffery, Sheila McCurdy, Sheila Murphy, Sheila Nugent, Mary O’Hagan, Rachel, Pradeepan Ragunathan, Mary Scully, Greta Street, Voni Tesi, Rose Yates, Claire Ryan in Emerson Court.

Anniversaries Occurring at this time – February/March

Michael Butler, Pauline Carroll, May Coleman, Nancy Cronin, Oliver Fant, Kathy Forsythe, Donal Hayes, Sue Jones, Kathleen Keanely, Pat Kivneen, Agatha Linton, Maura Meadway, James Medlin, Peter Murray, Margaret O’Connell, Ann O’Leary, Bridget O’Leary, John Passet, Ann Russell, Eamonn Shanahan, James Smith, Anthony Soares, Grace Walsh, David Ward, Vincent Wright

Parish Priest: Fr Britto Belevendran, (01708 507020)
Parish Administrator: Daphne Thomas, Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri (10am-1pm) (01708 507020)
Pastoral Team Leader: Graham Daniels (07542 588763)
Steward of the Gospel: Mandy Meadway (07801 470516)
Parish Finance: Mrs Stephanie Mallen (07983 962465)
Diocesan Safeguarding Representative: Katie Nash (07825 293308)
Hall & Lounge Bookings: English Martyrs Parish Office (01708 507020)
Church & Hall Caretaker: Mike Dineen (07415 727926)
Legion of Mary: Michael Okafor (07956 586370)

The English Martyrs Catholic Church (Diocese of Brentwood)
Parish address: 240 Alma Avenue, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 6BJ
Parish Tel.no: 01708 507020
Parish website: <http://www.englishmartyrshx.com/>
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Founded 1955

Diocese of Brentwood

Registered Charity No. 23409