



St Francis of Assisi

Parish Newsletter

".....we can celebrate the most beautiful Christmas ever. In one of your woods, in Greccio, there is a cave similar to that of Bethlehem. I would like to represent the Christmas scene and see with our eyes, the poverty in which the Child Jesus came into the world. I want to see how he was placed in a crib and lay there between the ox and the donkey".



St Francis of

Assisi.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Grove Crescent Road, Stratford, London, E15 1BJ

SUNDAY CYCLE: B (MARK)

WEEKDAYS CYCLE: II



18th February 2024 – 1st Sunday of Lent. We come

together as a community in loving relationship with our neighbour and with all living creatures. "Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary" (Pope Benedict XVI). We trust in God's compassion and mercy. Time spent in reflection during the season of Lent can help us to change and to grow in faith. Jesus spent time in the desert where he was put to the test as he prepared himself for his mission. He calls on us to repent and believe the Gospel.

Today's Reading

Genesis 9:8-15: God establishes a covenant with Noah, his descendants and every living creature. God sets a bow in the clouds as a sign of the covenant.

Response to the Psalm: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.

1 Peter 3:18-22: Peter gives hope to his listeners. As we prepare to renew our baptismal vows at Easter, we are called to repent, to change and to believe in the Gospel.

Mark 1:12-15: Jesus stays in the desert for forty days. He emerges to tell the crowds that the kingdom of God is close at hand.

"The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel".

The Church marks the 40-day of Lent as an opportunity to make a new beginning with God. In the bible, the desert was a place of special encounter with God. The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the desert after the exodus from Egypt. Elijah spent 40 days in the desert until he was strengthened by God to resume his prophetic task. Mark wrote that after Jesus' baptism, the Spirit sent him into the desert for forty days to confront the powers of evil, which Mark termed "the wild beasts". In contrast to the disobedience of God's people, Jesus rejected every temptation to earthly power. The ways of the world were not the ways of Jesus. As disciples of Jesus, we reject the so called "wisdom of the world" with its political power and military might. In Jesus, God's kingdom arrived, and the Messianic era had begun, a time for the restoration of all creation. Matthew wrote: "The devil left Jesus for a time". Temptations keep coming back; but we must put our trust in Jesus' message to repent and believe in the good news (the gospel).

EVERY FRIDAY DURING LENT – STATIONS OF THE CROSS – 7:00PM.

FRIDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2024 – CAFOD FAMILY FAST DAY.

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH 2024 – STATIONS OF THE CROSS IN THE OLYMPIC PARK

SATURDAY 25TH MAY 2024 – PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM – DETAILS IN THE NEWSLETTER & POSTER AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH.

Pray for those who have died, and those whose Anniversaries occur around this time, also, please pray for the sick,

and, remember the People of Ukraine. We also pray for peace in the Holy Land.

LENT: LENTEN REGULATIONS

The Season of Lent is a Catholic liturgical season consisting of forty days beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding at sunset on Holy Thursday. It is a time for the celebration of Easter. The official liturgical colour is purple or violet. Throughout history, Jews and Christians have found **prayer**, **fasting**, and **almsgiving** to be an important part of repentance and renewal. Rather than giving up something, a lot of Catholics address the thing in their own personal conduct that needs to be changed or they perform some outreach to other people in need. **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday** are obligatory days of universal fasting and abstinence. **Fasting** allows a person to eat one full meal a day; Two smaller meals count as one full meal.. **Abstinence** (from meat) is required of everyone who has reached their 14th year. It is mandatory for everyone over 18 and under 60. Drinking ordinary liquids does not break the fast. Traditionally, the ashes used for Ash Wednesday come from burning the Palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday. Ashes are a biblical symbol of mourning and penance used since the time of Moses ("sackcloth and ashes," Nm 19:9-10, 17-18). They also symbolize death and so remind us of our mortality. Thus, when the priest signs you with the ashes, he says, either "**Remember! You are dust and to dust you shall return.**" Or, as a reminder of the joy of eternal life: "**Repent and believe the good news!**" Ashes remind us of the Day of Judgment when we stand before God. To prepare well for that day, we must die now to sin so that we can rise to new life in Christ Being marked with ashes at the beginning of Lent indicates our need for deeper conversion of our lives during this season of renewal.



FIVE-A-DAY

We hear a lot about the “five-a-day diet” – a fruit and vegetable diet for **physical health**. There is also a five-a-day programme for **mental health**:
1. being physically active; 2. connecting with other people; 3. taking time to notice our surroundings; 4. learning something new; 5. giving to our neighbours and the local community.

Here is a five-a-day programme for **spiritual health**: **1. Prayer; 2. Spiritual reading; 3. Silence; 4. Giving to others; 5. ‘enough’**
Try these for Lent. (*That last item is: ‘enough stuff’ – live simply.*)

LENT 2024

Prayer ***Fasting*** ***Almsgiving***

Stations of the Cross – every Friday 7pm.

Novena to St Anthony – every Tuesday 12.15pm.

Holy Hour - Adoration – every Saturday 10.30–11.30am.

Weekday Mass – Mon-Fri 12.15pm; Sat 10am.

Confession – Sat 10.30-11.30am & 5-5.45pm (extra times during Lent as announced).

Stations of the Cross in the Olympic Park

23rd March 2024

PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM

SATURDAY 25TH MAY 2024

Please see the posters around the Church regarding the Diocesan pilgrimage to Walsingham. This is a very popular pilgrimage and St Francis' Church intend to organise 2 coaches to take our Parishioners to Walsingham to join the pilgrimage. The coaches will leave Stratford at 8am to ensure we can make the most of the day. The coaches will leave Walsingham at 5pm for return to Stratford. Pilgrims are advised to take a packed lunch and drinks, as although there is a cafeteria on site it is likely to be busy. **Minimum cost is £10 per person.** However, as the cost of the coach travel will be at least double this, if Pilgrims can pay more than the minimum this would help to cover costs and would be very much appreciated. Join Bishop Alan and other parishes around the Diocese of Brentwood in Walsingham. We will celebrate Mass at the Basilica before walking the Holy Mile to the grounds of Walsingham Abbey to celebrate Vespers and Benediction on the site of the Holy House. **If you would like to come please contact Sarah McKiernan on 07778 868827 to secure your place. Please book early to avoid disappointment**

Grove Crescent Rd, Stratford, E15 1BJ **Masses**
Monday to Friday 12:15. **Tuesday**, after Mass, St Anthony Novena.
Saturday: Morning Prayer: 9:40am Mass 10am followed by Holy Hour Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 11:30am.
Confession: Saturday: 10:30am - 11:30am & 5pm –5:45pm
Sunday: **6pm** Saturday, **9am, 10:15am, 12 noon &**

4:30pm (Ukrainian).

Fr Michael O'Grady, OFM (Parish Priest)

Fr Brian McGrath, OFM

Fr Yusuf Bagh, OFM

Address: The Friary, 160 The Grove, Stratford, E15 1NS.

Parish Office: Monday to Friday 9:30am - 3pm Parish Secretary: Kathleen

Allen Pastoral Assistant: Derek Hoddy Tel: 0208 534 1964 Email:

stratford@friar.org

Website: stfrancisassisistratford.com