

**A PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF LANCASTER  
for the First Sunday of Lent 21 February.**

My dear people,

I send you my greetings as we begin the Holy Season of Lent, aware that we remain in some ways a scattered flock, still doing battle with the pandemic. Reflecting on Christ's forty days in the wilderness, it could be said we are engaged in battle with the pan-demonic. It is a time of temptation. I was sorely tempted to re-issue last year's Lenten Pastoral, partly to see how many notice, partly out of idleness and partly because I thought it was rather good ... and there's another temptation; pride! St Mark's account of our Blessed Lord's time in the wilderness is astoundingly brief. Perhaps a Lenten Pastoral should follow suit, stating the stark essentials we must follow to make Lent fruitful. According to tradition, this Letter will be read in all churches and chapels of the Diocese at every public Mass on the First Sunday of Lent. However, many parishes are not holding public worship, and those that are have greatly reduced congregations. Added to that, our Liturgies must be short, reducing the time we are socially gathered. Is the pandemic a cure for lengthy sermons? If so, may we live to see if the cure lasts. So, our religious practice is reduced to stark essentials, just as our Lord found Himself without the freedom and comforts one grows used to when ordinary circumstances prevail. Where the Master is, there the willing disciple must be found too. It is a time of intense on-going formation for both the individual and for the Church. Three life-lines are given us; prayer, fasting and alms-giving.

**Prayer.** Christ promised to remain with us, and here we find Him an example of prayer. More than that, we are taken into His prayer through His conversation with the Father, His obedience to the Father's will and His union with the Father. This is more than asking God for favours or help with the things we can't manage. It is a desire for the Life of heaven. It is also an experience here on earth of the Life of heaven.

**Fasting.** Christ accepted less of this world's pleasures and ease even though on other occasions He would accept them and enjoy them. But here He deliberately puts them aside, knowing that they do not last. He acknowledges another order of delights, the delights that will last. Fasting is a discipline and an act of trust in the promise of a loving God. He knows our needs before we ask.

**Almsgiving.** Christ shows us that the fundamental motive for almsgiving is compassion for others. Later He instructed His disciples to 'Go out to the whole world'. Material-giving remains an essential expression of obeying that command, showing solidarity with our neighbour. It saves us from living a selfish life. Sharing our time also gains us 'credit'. In this unfair world some are privileged and some are obviously disadvantaged. In these times more will be asked of some than of others. Needy causes are easy to find, overwhelmingly and exhaustingly easy. We do well to recall who it is telling us to persevere in charity even to the point of our own exhaustion and our own diminishing. He is the guarantee that we will not go short. His love will grow in us. 'Give, and gifts will be given to you.' And what of Mary's place in her Son's Lent? Did He speak with her before He left for the wilderness? Did she know where He was, what He was facing? Did He recall the blessing of a mother's worry? May Our Lady be with us in our prayer, fasting and almsgiving this Lent. Much more could be said, but, following the example of St. Mark, this will do for now. May this Lenten message open doors of hope for you, bringing in the clean air of the wilderness, and with it, a reassuring experience of Christ's closeness. He has overcome all evil.

With my prayers for each of you, and my blessing,  
+Paul Swarbrick, Bishop of Lancaster

# St Anthony of Padua

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**Priests:** Fr. Peter Draper, Fr. John Moriarty (Tel: 725193)

**Deacons:** Rev. John Kilshaw (07759 943667)

Rev. Tom Butler (retired - 07853777957)

**Sunday Masses:** 6.00 (Vigil - Saturday Evening) 9.30am, 5.00pm (Sunday Morning)

**Weekday Mass:** Mon-Wed, Fri: 9.15am. (Thurs 9.15am at Holy Family)

**Confessions:** on request

**Annexe:** 725544

**Social Centre:** 735963

**Primary school:** 726621

**Playgroup/Preschool** 07963 700591

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## *Be open to transformation*

'The last sentences of today's gospel are considered by many as the summary of Jesus' teaching. "The kingdom of God is *at hand*." i.e. *now*. *We don't die into it; we awaken into it*. The Kingdom of Heaven is really a metaphor for a state of consciousness. It is a whole new way of seeing, which happens when we 'repent' which means to change our mind or turn around. Whatever course we are on we may have to do a 180° turn. And this will entail spending time in the wilderness. "The spirit drove Jesus into the desert." We seldom freely choose our times of change, transformation or conversion. We are usually driven towards them. Circumstances change, fall apart and undo 'business as usual'. It's usually only then that we change. We don't change until we have to.' [1]

Today's gospel encourages us to allow that transformation within us. 'So many of our external securities are being dismantled as we go through the traumatic experiences of Covid. We all rely on the constancy of the structures of society so when the structures suddenly break open, we start to break open. That's what trauma is: we can tolerate anything as long as the centre holds, but it's very scary when the centre starts to go. Lent is a time to regroup ourselves, a time to deepen our awareness that our centre is God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and in these moments of realisation we see that fear has no foundations.' [2]

All over the world images of the rainbow have reminded us that there is hope and light to follow these days of chaos. Today's first reading tells us that this good news is grounded in God's covenant of love with all people and all creation. 'This infinite love of God is our origin' [2] On Ash Wednesday we are reminded that "the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground" (Gen 2:7) This is not meant to be a 'doom and gloom' reminder, but a moment of awe and wonder, knowing what God can do with dust.

'So let us be marked not for sorrow. And let us be marked not for shame. Let us be marked not for false humility or for thinking we are less than we are, but for claiming what God can do within the dust, within the dirt, within the stuff of which the world is made.' [3]

"Be open to transformation and trust the good news."

*Adapted: [1] Richard Rohr [2] James Finley [3] Jan Richardson: Blessing the Dust*

## *First Sunday in Lent* Year B

21st February 2021

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# DIARY AND MASS INTENTIONS

## for the week beginning Saturday 20th February 2021

Sat 6.00pm	<i>St. Ant</i>	Private intention	
Sun 9.30am 11.00am 5.00pm	<i>St. Ant</i> <i>H. Family</i> <i>St. Ant</i>	Brian Newsham Lancs Infirm Clergy For our parish	<i>First Sunday in Lent</i>
Mon 9.15am	<i>St. Ant</i>	Fr. Fred Hamer	<i>Feast: Chair of St. Peter</i>
Tue 9.15am	<i>St. Ant</i>	Winnie Gildea	
Wed 9.15am	<i>St. Ant</i>	Michael Draper	
Thur 9.15am	<i>H. Family</i>	Private intention	
Fri 9.15am	<i>St. Ant</i>	President Biden	
Sat 6.00pm	<i>St. Ant</i>	Bill Ellis	
Sun 9.30am 11.00am 5.00pm	<i>St. Ant</i> <i>H. Family</i> <i>St. Ant</i>	Philip Kramer For our parish Private intention	<i>Second Sunday in Lent</i>

**Masses received this week:** Nita Duggan, Philip Kramer, Pauline Harvey

### BIDDING PRAYER INTENTIONS

Let us pray for our Catholic family; for Bishop Paul, for all the people of our Diocese. May we draw ever closer to Christ and let our faith show in all we do and say.

For ourselves that, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, this Lent may be an opportunity to move away from selfishness and pride to a deepening love of God and neighbour.

For the needy and hungry of the world and for the development and relief work of CAFOD. May this Friday's Fast Day serve to remind us of the call to live more simply and put our faith into action.

We remember in our prayers those of the parish who are suffering ill-health just now, and those who care for them, particularly: Harold Slack, Bill O'Shaughnessy, Malaya, Lawrence Dunnagan, Ray Mannion, Bill York, Vera, Trevor Hughes, Claire, Joyce Hilton, Rev John Kilshaw;

**those who have died recently:** Margaret McKeown, Margaret Nugent, Agnes Long, Thomas Newsham;

**and those whose anniversaries occur around this time:** Fr. Fred Hamer, Joseph Slater, Eileen Bamber, Kathleen Gielty, Arnold Horner, Phebe Billington, John Rawcliffe, Jim Whiteside, Stephen & Clare Cummings, David Walker, Gervase Bamber, Bill Ellis, John Hanlon, Francis Smith. May they rest in peace.

## LENT

### Stations of the Cross.

We are not able to have the Stations in church as usual but some members of the parish will present them on zoom every Friday. 'Doors open' at 5.45. Session starts 6.00pm prompt. Meeting ID: 860 7625 5774 Passcode: 068559

### CAFOD Lent Fast Day—this Friday

Our parish CAFOD Group have produced a video for this. It will be available on Youtube from 10.15am this Sunday. See <https://youtu.be/bxWgyBI7svE>

Please take an envelope today. You can donate online at [cafod.org.uk/lent](http://cafod.org.uk/lent), or by texting LENT 10 to 70460 to give £10, (or substitute any other amount e.g. LENT 20).NB If you do not wish to receive marketing communications text LENTNOINFO. You may also telephone 0303 303 3030 or send to CAFOD, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7JB. Thank you.

### Livestreaming Mass

As well as normal Mass in church we are now able to livestream the 9.30am Sunday Mass from St. Anthony's church. Go to the St. Anthony of Padua YouTube page and look for the link there. Although you cannot obviously receive holy communion while watching this streaming you could make your own spiritual communion at this time, as follows:

My Jesus, I believe You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since at this moment I cannot receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen

### First Holy Communions

We're looking at using Zoom or Microsoft Teams to set up preparation for the sacraments of reconciliation and first holy communion. Its not ideal and no preparation can ever be as good as being at Mass each week gathering with the parish community around the altar of the Lord. But it's a shame to keep the children waiting to take this great step forward in their faith. Please keep them and their families in your prayers.

### Virtual Coffee Morning

Join your fellow parishioners at the Zoom Coffee Morning at 11.00 am this Sunday Meeting ID: 898 4267 4110 Passcode: 229935

### A National Novena to St. Joseph

- will take place 10th-18th March at St Joseph's Church, Maidenhead. Masses are 7.30 pm 10th-12th March, 10am 13th March, 11am 14th March, 7.30 pm 15th-18th March. If you would like to join in from home you can follow the Masses on Zoom and YouTube via the website: [stjosephsparish.co.uk](http://stjosephsparish.co.uk) and [www.millhillmissionaries.com/novena](http://www.millhillmissionaries.com/novena) where you will also find the Novena prayer leaflet or email [novenamhm@gmail.com](mailto:novenamhm@gmail.com) for a copy.