

United Parish@Home

Sunday Services



February 2026

**The United Parish of Chinnor, Sydenham,
Aston Rowant and Crowell**

The ministry team offer you these services, particularly if you find you are unable to attend church.

Our prayer is that these services will help you still feel connected to, and loved by, your church family.

Sunday 1st February page 3

Sunday 8th February page 9

Sunday 15th February page 13

Ash Wednesday 17th February page 18

Sunday 22nd February page 26

Sunday 1st February 2026

4th Sunday of Epiphany

Opening prayer

Lord, help us to put aside this time to be with you. Calm our minds and fill us with the knowledge that you are always present with us wherever we may be. Enrich this time of worship as we learn to recognise God's vision and purpose for our lives. Amen

Psalm 36 vs 5-10

Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.
How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast in the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from the river of delights.
For with you is the fountain of life;
In your light we see light.
Continue your love to those who know you,
your righteousness to the upright in heart.

Prayer of confession

Father God, we have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and humbly repent for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us; that we might delight in your will and walk your ways to the glory of your name. Amen

Collect for the 4th Sunday of Epiphany

God our creator,
who in the beginning
commanded the light to shine out of darkness:

we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief,
shine into the hearts of all your people,
and reveal the knowledge of your glory
in the face of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Bible Reading John 2 vs 1-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.' 'Women, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Nearby stood six stone jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from eighty to a hundred and twenty litres. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so, they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet,' They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.' What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed him.

Reflection - Meditation of the master of the banquet

(A most Amazing Man by Nick Fawcett/ offered by Margaret)

What a relief it was:
to discover new wine,
sufficient for all our needs and more besides,

just when we were running dry.
We'd misjudged, big time,
and were facing utter humiliation,
the festivities set to peter out just as they reached full swing.
But that's when Jesus stepped in,
producing fresh supplies by the gallon,
and not just cheap plonk
but wine fit for a king,
special reserve!
A miracle some called it,
and rightly so,
but it was more than that,
much more –
a sign from God speaking of who and what he was,
of what he means and brings for all.
For, you see, everything he said and did –
his words of peace and acts of love –
spoke of new beginnings,
of one who not only turns water into wine
but transforms life itself,
making the ordinary special,
the empty full,
the old new.
And that's not all,
for if I read things right there's more to come:
not just blessings now beyond deserving
but greater still,
the best yet held in store.

Prayer

Sovereign God,
we praise you for your transforming power,
the way you have changed lives across the centuries,
bringing good out of evil,
hope out of despair

and order out of chaos.

We thank you for our own experience of renewal,
the difference you have made to us personally,
giving meaning to life,
joy, peace and fulfilment.

Teach us never to underestimate what you can do,
nor to give up on any situation or person,
including ourselves,
no matter how hopeless things may seem.

Help us to live each day in the knowledge
that your purpose continues
and your love endures for ever,
and thus, to trust you for the future,
assured of blessing still to come.

Amen

A time for personal prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen

Hymn

Songs of thankfulness and praise

Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesu, Lord, to thee we raise,
manifest by the star
to the sages from afar;
branch of royal David's stem
in thy birth at Bethlehem:
anthems be to thee address,
God in man made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophets, Priest and King supreme;
and at Cana wedding guest
in thy Godhead manifest;
manifest in power divine,
changing water into wine;
anthems be to thee address,
God in man made manifest.

Manifest in making whole
palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight,
quelling all the devil's might;
manifest in gracious will,
ever bringing good from ill:
anthems be to thee address,
God in man made manifest.

Sun and moon shall darkened be,
stars shall fall, the heavens shall flee;
Christ will then like lightening shine,
all will see his glorious sign;
all will then the trumpet hear,
all will see the judge appear:
thou by all wilt be confest,
God in man made manifest.

Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
Mirrored in the holy word;
May we imitate thee now,
And be pure, as pure art thou;
That we like to thee may be
At thy great Epiphany;
And may praise thee, ever blest,
God in man made manifest.

Blessing

May God the Father, who led the wise men by the shining star to find the Christ, the light from light, lead us also in our pilgrimage to find the Lord.
May God the Son, who turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana, transform our lives and make glad our hearts.
May God the Holy Spirit, who came upon the beloved Son at his baptism in the river Jordan pour out his gifts on us who have come to the waters of new birth. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. Amen

Sunday 8th February 2026
2nd Sunday before Lent

Introduction

Today is the 2nd Sunday before Lent. The gospel theme is 'do not worry'. Jesus is in the middle of His sermon on the mount and is instructing His Disciples.

Opening Prayer

We praise you Father because you have exalted your Son Jesus Christ to your right hand in glory and given Him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow. So Father, accept our worship, forgive us our sins and grant that in this 'At Home' service, we may give you the glory and honour. Amen.

Collect for 2nd Sunday before Lent

Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things, now and for ever.

Psalm 136 vs1-9

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, *His love endures forever.*
- ² Give thanks to the God of gods, *His love endures forever.*
- ³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords: *His love endures forever.*
- ⁴ to him who alone does great wonders, *His love endures forever.*
- ⁵ who by his understanding made the heavens, *His love endures forever.*
- ⁶ who spread out the earth upon the waters, *His love endures forever.*
- ⁷ who made the great lights *His love endures forever.*
- ⁸ the sun to govern the day, *His love endures forever.*
- ⁹ the moon and stars to govern the night, *His love endures forever.*
- ²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven, *His love endures forever.*

Gospel reading

Matthew 6 vs 25-34, [Jesus is speaking]

²⁵ “Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Reflection

[adapted by Brian from a commentary by Catherine Williams in the Canterbury Preachers Companion, 2026.]

In today's gospel, Jesus encourages His disciples (ie ‘us’) to live fully in the moment. Jesus says there is no need to worry about tomorrow because tomorrow’s trouble is for tomorrow. Instead, we are encouraged to focus on today, on the here and now. Worrying about tomorrow is a dead-end activity says Jesus: ‘Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?’ (Indeed, worrying could have the opposite effect!)

The Greek word used in this passage for ‘worry’ means to be ‘*over-anxious*’. We’re not talking about serious anxiety requiring counselling or medication.

It is more of a state of mind where we have become overly concerned about things where worry takes over so that we can no longer flourish because we are so tensed and stressed. Frenzied activity is a symptom of this type of worry. However, here we are talking about being over-anxious.

So, let's live in and for **this** moment, this **now** moment. Let's relax and enjoy God's goodness and provision. Let's celebrate the blessing of God in our lives and be God's blessing to others.

Personal prayer

Pray for what's on your mind, what you've seen on the news, for the places where you want God's peace to spread. For example, why not pray for:

- Those who you know are worried and stressed at this time.
- the Church and fellow Christians that we will all be worthy disciples.
- Church leaders who seek to minister to the multitude of Churches, chapels and fellowships where congregations gather. Especially pray for Jacky, our Rector, the ministry team and the PCC.
- family and friends, your street, for neighbours, for local, national and international leaders and governments.
- shopkeepers, carers, street wardens; for hospitals, doctors and nurses and others in the front line, the NHS.
- what you've seen on the news; the trouble spots of the world and those places and people in need.
- those who we know would love us to pray for them at this time, for the lonely, the ill, the stressed.
- Finally, why not pray the Lord's Prayer as Jesus Himself suggested.

Hymn

Why not say or indeed sing the following hymn:

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.
Come, bow before Him now, with reverence and fear.
In Him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord, is shining all around.
He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned.
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of Light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord, is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord, is moving in this place.
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace.
No work too hard for Him, in faith receive from Him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord, is moving in this place.

Closing Prayer & Blessing

Dear Father, thank You for our fellowship and for calling us together to worship and grow. Keep us united in love, rooted in grace, and focused on the mission you've given us. As we go into this week ahead, may we walk in step with your Spirit and reflect your heart in everything we do.
In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Amen.

The Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

Sunday 15th February
Sunday before Lent

The Sunday called Quinquagesima (according to the Book of Common Prayer)

Opening Prayers

O Lord, open thou our lips *and* our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us.

Praise ye the Lord. The Lord's name be praised. Amen

Gospel Reading Matthew 17:1-9 (King James version)

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

³ And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

⁴ Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

⁵ While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and were sore afraid.

⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

⁸ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Reflection (*by Jacky*)

The Transfiguration comes just after Jesus has begun to speak about suffering. Peter has named him as Messiah, and almost immediately Jesus speaks of rejection, pain, and death. The disciples are confused. This is not the shape of the future they imagined.

So Jesus takes three of them up a mountain. Not to explain everything. But to let them see him.

On the mountain, Jesus is transfigured. His face shines. His clothes blaze with light. It is a lifting of the veil. For this one glorious moment, the disciples see who has been with them all along. And Moses and Elijah appear, standing with him, representing the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. Therefore, we have the whole story of Israel gathered into this one moment. Everything God has been saying and doing now converges on Jesus.

But then the voice speaks. "This is my Son, the Beloved. With him I am well pleased. Listen to him."

This is about discipleship at its deepest level: listening to Jesus. Discipleship is not attending church every week, it not following an idea, it is not defending a tradition.

The glory of the Transfiguration does not cancel what Jesus has just said about the cross, that so upset Peter. This moment is a moment of preparation for the cross.

The light on the mountain is given because darkness lies ahead. The disciples are not shown glory so that they can avoid suffering, but so that suffering does not have the final word.

Peter wants to build shelters. He wants to stay. He wants to preserve the moment. But the cloud passes and the vision cannot be held. Moses and Elijah disappear. And when the disciples look up, they see only Jesus. Jesus is still with them and still walking towards Jerusalem.

This reminds us that God does not promise constant clarity, but that God does give moments of assurance. Moments when we are reminded who Jesus is, so that when fear returns, we are not undone by it. The Transfiguration says this: The path of discipleship may pass through suffering, but it is held within glory. And Jesus does not lead us anywhere he has not already gone.

Prayers *(in the tradition of the Book of Common Prayer)*

The Lord be with you. And with thy spirit.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;

Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us. And grant us thy salvation.

O Lord, save the King And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness. And make thy chosen people joyful.

O Lord, save thy people. And bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord.

Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.

O God, make clean our hearts within us. And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

Amen

The Collect of the Day (known as Quinquagesima)

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth: Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

The Collect for Peace

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord,
in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies;
that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect for Grace

O Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day; Defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

A prayer for the King and Parliament

Almighty God, fountain of all Goodness, we humbly beseech thee to bless our sovereign lord thy servant Charles III, this parliament and all who set authority under her; that they may order all things in wisdom, righteousness and peace to the honour of thy holy name and the good of thy Church and people.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

A Prayer for the clergy and people

Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: send down upon our Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and all Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing.

Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ
Amen.

A prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications into thee; and dost promise, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come to life everlasting. **Amen**

Final prayer

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

Hymn

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessèd, most glorious, the ancient of days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish-but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
But of all Thy rich graces this grace, Lord, impart
Take the veil from our faces, the vile from our heart.

All laud we would render; O help us to see
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee,
And so let Thy glory, Almighty, impart,
Through Christ in His story, Thy Christ to the heart.

Ash Wednesday
18th February 2026

“Lent is the ‘forty’-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection.

Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the Middle Ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross.”

‘Church of England Website’

The Greeting

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
since early days Christians have observed with great devotion
the time of our Lord’s passion and resurrection
and prepared for this by a season of penitence and fasting.
By carefully keeping these days,
Christians take to heart the call to repentance
and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel,
and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.
I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,
to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance;
by prayer, fasting, and self-denial;
and by reading and meditating on God’s holy word.

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

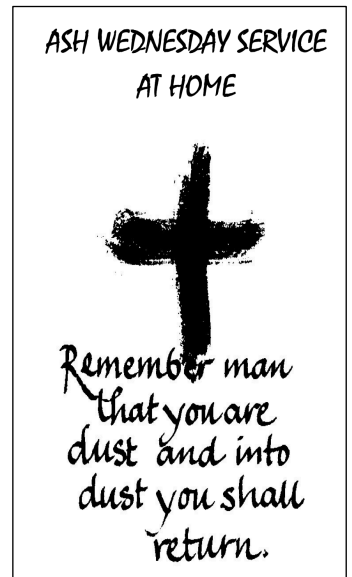
A Psalm set for Ash Wednesday - Psalm 51

1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; according to the abundance of your compassion blot out my offences.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my faults and my sin is ever before me.
4 Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
5 So that you are justified in your sentence and righteous in your judgement.
6 I have been wicked even from my birth, a sinner when my mother conceived me.
7 Behold, you desire truth deep within me and shall make me understand wisdom in the depths of my heart.
8 Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.
9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones you have broken may rejoice.
10 Turn your face from my sins and blot out all my misdeeds.
11 Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
12 Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy spirit from me.
13 Give me again the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your gracious spirit;
14 Then shall I teach your ways to the wicked and sinners shall return to you.
15 Deliver me from my guilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.
16 O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
17 For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it; you take no delight in burnt offerings.
18 The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Confession

We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God. **Amen.**



You may wish to imagine you are now in one of United Parish Churches, and that the 'Imposition of Ashes' follows as below. As you read the declaration made by the Minister as each person receives the sign of the cross on their forehead, make the sign of the Cross on your own forehead, remembering Christ is with you as you make your Lenten Commitment to turn away from sin.

Ashes are a sign of the spirit of penitence with which we shall keep this season of Lent:

God our Father, you create us from the dust of the earth: grant that these ashes may be for us a sign of our penitence and a symbol of our mortality; for it is by your grace alone that we receive eternal life in Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ."

Absolution

God our Father,
the strength of all who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers;
and because, in our weakness,
we can do nothing good without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in keeping your commandments
we may please you, both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gospel Reading - John 8 vs 1-11

8¹while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, ⁴they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' ⁶They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' ⁸And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' ¹¹She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

Reflection (*By Tony*)

My Grandfather was the owner of a family firm that manufactured coach and saddlery fittings, and worked a lot with brass. An early childhood memory is of cleaning various family brass items, with 'Brasso', to clean off any tarnish, and for a "Longer, Lasting, Shine". Sometimes, however much Brasso I used, or elbow grease I applied, there were blemishes and dull tarnished areas where there certainly wasn't a 'longer, lasting, shine', and in the process I ended up with very dirty hands, and sometimes clothes!!

In our Gospel Reading today, there are a lot of blemishes, and plenty of tarnish. Someone caught out, 'in the act', but also the baying of a self-righteous mob, creating an unpleasant frisson. All with the intent of destroying this 'Teacher', this 'Healer', this 'Prophet', who was disturbing the Temple peace, where the scribes and Pharisees had everything under control, including 'God'.

Lent is an opportunity to re-visit our understanding of sin and forgiveness, and examine where maybe, we have things 'inappropriately under control'.

The Greek word hamartia (ἁμαρτία) and the Hebrew word chata' (חַטָּא), both used in the Bible, convey the idea of 'sin' as failing to hit a goal or straying from the intended path, a metaphor for falling short of God standards as set out in the 10 Commandments and Jesus' teaching. So let's obsess less like the people in the reading, about the commission, but rather more on the aim of our lives, which is to be in a relationship of 'Shalom' with God.

Jesus reminds us with his words: *'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'*

Confronting sin is important, but far more important is examining our relationship with Christ, and ensuring we live in the light of his love and forgiveness and enjoy that joy of knowing we are forgiven and filled with his Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:17

⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10

One of the more interesting suggestions I have found online for cleaning the tarnish off brass, is this: *"Coat the item in ketchup, let sit for 20+ mins (longer for heavy tarnish), then rinse and dry."*

This has reminded me that my journey through Lent will lead me to the foot of the Cross where I will see the blood of Christ shed for me – the sacrifice of blood that sets me free from sin. Then, to the empty tomb and to the Disciples on the road to Emmaus, where as Jesus breaks the bread:

"he gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened" Luke 24: 30.

May God open our eyes this Lent with a fresh understanding of sin and forgiveness, the cost, and life in all its fullness.

Intercessions

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, let us pray to the Father.

We pray for our United Parish and all it does in our schools, care home and community

Lord of compassion,
in your mercy hear us.

For peace in the world that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may grow among nations and peoples, let us pray to the Father.

We pause for a moment and maybe look at the newspaper headlines or recall the last news bulletin we listened to, and pray for the World, our Nation, and our local communities

Lord of compassion,
in your mercy hear us.

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer - for refugees, prisoners, and all in danger; that they may be relieved and protected, let us pray to the Father.

We pray for the work of charities that seek to help all those just mentioned

Lord of compassion,
in your mercy hear us.

In communion with all those who have walked in the way of holiness let us pray to the Father.

We pause to pray for and to remember those on our United Parish Prayer List, and for those known to us, unwell in body, mind or spirit, and those who grieve

Lord of compassion,
in your mercy hear us.

God our Father, in your love and goodness you have taught us to come close to you in penitence with prayer, fasting and generosity; accept our Lenten discipline, and when we fall by our weakness, raise us up by your unfailing mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn

1 My song is love unknown—
my Savior's love to me;
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I, that for my sake
my Lord should take frail flesh and die?

2 He came from His blest throne
salvation to bestow;
but men made strange, and none
the longed for Christ would know.
But oh, my Friend, my Friend indeed,
who at my need His life did spend!

3 Sometimes they strew His way,
and His sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!" is all their breath,
and for His death they thirst and cry.

4 Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run;
He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
themselves displease,
and 'gainst Him rise.

5 They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away.
A murderer they save;
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful He to suff'ring goes,
that He His foes from thence might free.

6 In life, no house, no home
my Lord on earth might have;
in death, no friendly tomb
but what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heav'n was His home;
but mine the tomb wherein He lay.

7 Here might I stay and sing—
no story so divine!
Never was love, dear King,
never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend. *Samuel Crossman (1664)*

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Father, our source of life, you know our weakness. May we reach out
with joy to grasp your hand and to walk more readily in your ways.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

May the Father bless us, for he has adopted us as his children. **Amen.**
May the Son help us, for he has received us as brothers and sisters. **Amen.**
May the Spirit be with us, for he has made us his dwelling place. **Amen.**

Sunday 22nd February 2026

First Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayers

O Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading Matthew 4: 1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' ⁴ But he answered, 'It is written,

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

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you",
and "On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."

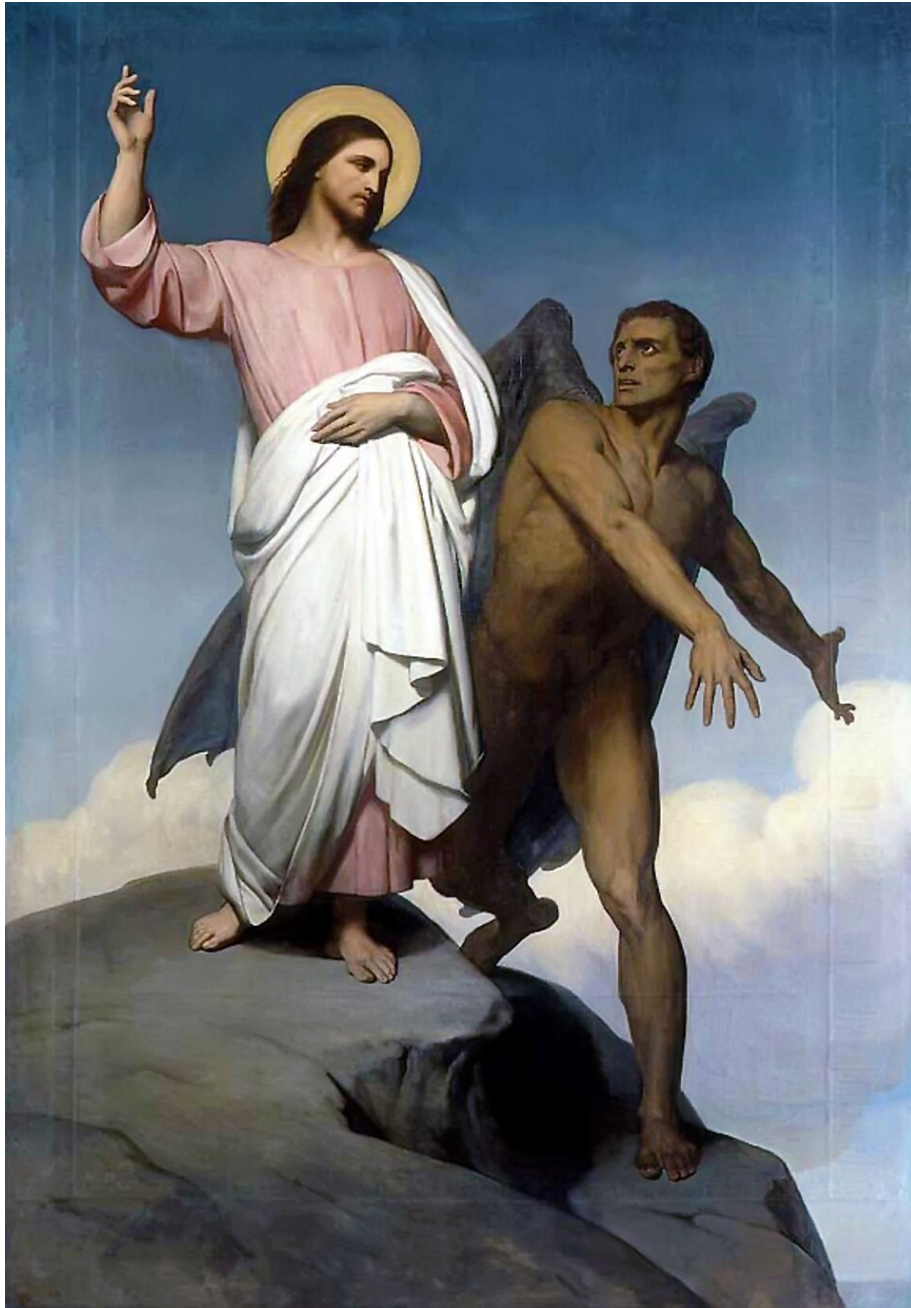
⁷ Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; ⁹ and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

"Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him."

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Reflection *(by Jacky)*



The Temptation of Christ by Ary Scheffer (1854)

Discussion about this painting by Patrick van der Vorst of “Christain Art” The clarity of this composition, and the direct approach to the narrative of today's Gospel passage, makes for a striking image. The characters impart emotion purely through easily recognisable expressions and gestures: the devil is promising the world, but Christ is pointing upwards to His Father.

Christ is dressed in bright, pure clothes, contrasting with the dark, shadowy figure of the Devil. For me the most poignant detail though, is the look on Christ's face. He doesn't avoid looking at the devil: he faces him directly, looking straight at the devil and rejecting his false promises.

Power is intoxicating. To be promised riches, wealth, influence and power beyond our wildest dreams, is hard to resist. Yet we are all called to resist such temptations, however small or big they are. Satan's temptations bring us immediately to the core question of Jesus' identity, as he calls into question who Jesus really is, saying provocatively: 'If you are the Son of God...' Each temptation the Devil then puts in front of Christ invites Him to turn away from His Father. In the first, he promises power; in the second he is testing God's fidelity; in the third all the power and glory the earth can offer is promised. Jesus resists them all.

Everyone is tempted, on a daily basis, however flagrant or subtle these temptations might be. We are all enticed to evil by the devil. Being aware of this is already half the battle won against Satan, for he does not want us to believe in him. Jesus did not defeat the devil by solely staying faithful to His Father but He also defeated him by quoting Scripture (see the last lines of our Gospel passage today). That is why our beloved Church and Pope Francis are inviting Catholics across the world to deepen our appreciation, love and faithful witness to God and his Word this year. The Year of the Word celebrates "The God who speaks" and helps us to remember that our Lord is communicating with us every day, especially through the Bible...

The Benedictus (*The Song of Zechariah*)

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

6 Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.

7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

8 To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.

9 In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1.68-79

Prayers

Take some time to offer to God your own prayers.

COLLECT For Lent 1

Heavenly Father, your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:

help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer

that we may witness to your saving love

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Awaiting his coming in glory, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has
taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Conclusion

May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.
Let us bless the Lord, thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn

Forty days and forty nights
Thou wast fasting in the wild;
Forty days and forty nights
Tempted, and yet undefiled.

Sunbeams scorching all the day;
Chilly dew-drops nightly shed;
Prowling beasts about Thy way;
Stones Thy pillow; earth Thy bed.

Should not we Thy sorrow share
And from worldly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Strong with Thee to suffer pain?

Then if Satan on us press,
Jesus, Savior, hear our call!
Victor in the wilderness,
Grant we may not faint nor fall!

So shall we have peace divine:
Holier gladness ours shall be;
Round us, too, shall angels shine,
Such as ministered to Thee.

Keep, O keep us, Savior dear,
Ever constant by Thy side;
That with Thee we may appear
At the eternal Eastertide.