



The Parish of St. Peter, Bushey Heath February 2026



From the vicar

St. Paul writes to the church in Ephesus,

⁸ *To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,* ⁹ *and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things;* ¹⁰ *that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.* ¹¹ *This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3: 8-11)*

The passage forms part of the Epistle for the feast of the Epiphany and contains some interesting and important ideas which deserve further exploration.

The context is that St. Paul is explaining to his readers his ministry to the Gentiles, a ministry which unites both Jew and Gentile in one body in Christ (see Ephesians 2: 14-16). It is this Gospel of peace which he still proclaims even though he is in prison at the time of writing. Fearing that his life may soon be brought to an end he feels that it is important to remind the churches in his care that the message he has delivered to them is the foundation of their eternal hope.

The general background in scripture is that revelation in the Old Testament in terms of the 'end things' and our eternal destiny – something which scholars call 'eschatology' – is a matter which is hidden. The purposes of God are explored in part by the prophets, but it is not until the events of the New Testament occur that all is fully revealed. At this point the Word is made flesh and the Spirit is given so that God, his purposes and salvation are fully revealed. Thus the whole of scripture deals with the theme of promise and fulfilment.

In **verse 8** St. Paul writes of the *unsearchable / unfathomable riches / wealth of Christ*. For our author this is a reference to the grace of God which expresses itself not just in the gift of 'things', but in Christ which is the gift of himself, something which for the recipient is completely unexpected and undeserved. (Note the humility in the Apostle's description of himself in this verse).

Continuing in **verses 9-10** we discover the cosmic scope of revelation which as already noted is hidden in the Old Testament and foreseen in part by the prophets, but now made manifest in Christ. This revelation is given first of all in the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Secondly, it is given through the life of the Church which is the Body of Christ. The Church presents the truth of God's grace to the *principalities and powers in the heavenly places* (see the note below) emphasising God's sovereignty over the cosmos and its powers and rulers. Thirdly, it is given through the new creation which is the fruit of Christ's work and which is based on the template of the original creation (rather than being a purely spiritual and abstract reality as proclaimed the Gnostic heretics).

The phrase *manifold wisdom of God* in **verse 10** refers to the complexity of the plan worked out in creation in human lives generally, but specifically in the comings and goings of the children of Israel and the members of the Church, both then and now.

Note. In Ephesians the *principalities and powers* are seen as malign, intermediate entities which exert influence over the earth and prevent access to God. In the Mediterranean world of the 1st Century they are associated with the astrology and magic of the pagan religions, but also with Satan and the fallen angels in contemporary Jewish cosmology.

For further reading: 2 Corinthians 2: 7-10; Colossians 1: 21-23

In these verses are eternal truth and a foundation of hope which serves as a suitable basis for our Lenten devotions.

PRAYER FOCUS

Please continue to pray for an end to conflict in the Near East, Ukraine and in countries beset by violence. Remember the faithful suffering persecution and all those living under the shadow of civil unrest especially the people of Iran.

From the diary...

Usual Sunday services: 8.00am Holy Communion; 9.30am Parish Mass

Sunday 25th January	Conversion of St. Paul
Wednesday 28 th January, 10.00am	Mass
Friday 30 th January, 7.00pm	Mass
Sunday 1st February	Presentation of Christ in the Temple
Wednesday 4 th February, 9.00am	Mass
	<i>Please note the change of time</i>
Friday 6 th February, 7.00pm	Mass
Sunday 8th February	Sexagesima / Second Sunday before Lent
	<i>In addition to services at 8am and 9.30am: Family Service at 11.15am.</i>
Wednesday 11 th February, 10.00am	Mass
8.00pm	Parochial Church Council in S. George's Chapel
Friday 13 th February, 7.00pm	Mass
Sunday 15th February	Quinquagesima / Sunday next before Lent
12 noon	Holy Baptism

ASH WEDNESDAY, 18TH FEBRUARY

Mass with imposition of ashes, 10.00am
Mass with hymns and imposition of ashes, 8.00pm



Thursday 19 th February, 8.00pm	Stations of the Cross
Friday 20 th February, 7.00pm	Mass
Sunday 22nd February	First Sunday of Lent
Wednesday 25 th February, 10.00am	Mass
Thursday 26 th February, 8.00pm	Stations of the Cross
Friday 27 th February, 7.00pm	Mass
Sunday 1st March	Second Sunday of Lent
Wednesday 4 th March, 10.00am	Mass
Thursday 5 th March, 8.00pm	Stations of the Cross
Friday 6 th March, 7.00pm	Mass

Palm Crosses

Please return last year's palm crosses by Sunday 8th February so that they can be burnt before Ash Wednesday.

Additional Curates Society Lent boxes

ACS works to support the provision of priests in 'poor and populous parishes' especially those in which the incumbent only receives a half-stipend (or no stipend at all). If you wish to have a collecting box for the work of ACS please pick one up in church. Your support is very much appreciated, not least by our sister parish Holy Cross, Marsh Farm in Luton whose priest is supported by ACS.

Walsingham Lamp

A lamp burns for St. Peter's Church at the shine of our Lady of Walsingham. If you would like to make a donation towards the cost of the annual renewal of the lamp please speak to Father Andrew.

Stations of the Cross

Join us for this profound devotion following Jesus on his journey to Calvary on Thursdays in Lent beginning on 19th February at 8.00pm.

Contact details:

Vicar: Fr. Andrew Burton SSC, a priest of the Society. (020 8950 1424). Usual day off Monday.
Churchwardens: Mr. Simon Farley (020 8950 4073) and Mr. Tony Quinn (07786 332654)