

Welcome to our Liturgy Office Spring newsletter. Having just celebrated the Feast of Christmas and the Epiphany, we turn our thoughts to Lent and Eastertide - the website contains a number of resources which we hope will enable you to celebrate those seasons fully. These include information about Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Lent itself and the Easter Triduum, to name but a few.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (26 February this year) and ends just before the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening (8 April) when the liturgical season of the Easter Triduum begins. Ash Wednesday itself, like Good Friday, is a day of Fasting and Abstinence and opens our awareness to the needs of others for whom fasting and abstinence is an unavoidable way of life. For Fasting and Abstinence guidelines see [here](#).

'When you fast, do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

Matthew 6: 16-18

Lent and the RCIA

Lent announces the 'final' period of preparation for those journeying towards baptism and initiation at Easter. It is the final period of preparation and an intense one, too. Far from being a cramming session where we try and fit in all those things we feel catechumens need in order to get them to the font, it is a time of prayerful, reflective preparation, a time of listening to the Word of God and immersing oneself in love of the God who draws us towards himself. It is the period of mystagogy that offers the time for continuing formation, for learning, and for the shaping of living; Lent is the time to ponder the call of the Lord and ponder the mysteries about to be entered into. So how does Lent shape up, RCIA-wise? We celebrate the Rite of Election, Scrutinies, Presentations, Holy Saturday Preparations and, finally, the Sacraments of Initiation at the Vigil. It is also a time when musicians more than ever will need to work closely with catechists so that music can be an integral part of the various rites.

The Sunday Gospels in Lent

During Lent in Year A of the three-year cycle, which we are celebrating this year, we encounter three gospels which are key not only for those who are seeking Baptism, speaking as they do of the process of conversion and of new life, but for all of us, helping us to appreciate that Lent is a time discipleship, illumination and new life, the season of purification and enlightenment. In Week Three we listen to the story of the Woman at the Well (discipleship), in Week Four it is the story of the Man born Blind (illumination) and in Week Five we hear of the raising of Lazarus (new life). We will also read these gospels in Years B and C if we have candidates who will be baptised at Easter.

The Rite of Election

This year it will take place on the Saturday, 29 February, (the Saturday after Ash Wednesday) at 11am and our Mass for all those who are newly baptised and newly received into full communion with the Catholic Church will be at 10.30am on 2 May – both of these celebrations will be in our cathedral.

Chrism Mass



Our annual Chrism Mass, when Bishop Declan will bless the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Catechumens and consecrate the Oil of Chrism - all of which will be used throughout the diocese in the coming year - will take place in our cathedral on Wednesday 7 April at 11am. This is a wonderful experience of the family of the diocese coming together to celebrate Mass just

before we begin the Holy Paschal Triduum. If you have never taken part in this celebration, do consider coming along.

Stations of the Cross

Stations of the Cross, also known as the The Way of the Cross, is a way to pray and meditate on Christ's sacrifice for us. It is divided into fourteen stations, journeying from the time Jesus was condemned until his burial, and has been long encouraged by the Church, particularly during Lent and Good Friday. Developed during the Crusades when the knights and pilgrims began to follow the route of Christ's way to Calvary, this devotion spread throughout Europe and was promulgated by the Franciscan friars in the 14th and 15th centuries. Eventually the 'Stations of the Cross' became an important catechetical tool, and its popularity inspired some of the great examples of medieval Christian art. Some scholars believe that



medieval miracle plays, which were essentially tableaux of Christ's life, developed from the sculptured representations of the Stations of the Cross in the great churches. During Lent or Holy Week most parishes have a service of Stations at least once and, whilst there are some excellent resources online and available from bookshops such as Redemptorist and CTS, many parishes have created their own set of reflections to pray with each Station.

Diocesan Liturgy Course

Our Diocesan Liturgy Course proved to be a great success and ended in December with a

beautiful Mass at St James Priory, in the centre of Bristol, where Bishop Declan presided, preached and presented certificates to the fifty or so course participants. We are currently looking at where our next course will be held, so do keep an eye on the Diocesan website for details.

Music Course



Stroud Deanery has been the first deanery to host a new short music course which incorporated three evenings and one Saturday. The primary purpose of the course was to look at the role of the music minister within the context of a parish, how we serve the community, how we use music effectively in the Mass and other forms of liturgy, and how we introduce our parishes communities to new music. Eleven committed souls braved often cold and wintery evenings to attend and committed to attending a whole Saturday to reflect upon the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Their final session gave them the opportunity to look more closely at the season of Lent and the Triduum. There was the opportunity to learn new music, appreciate how to celebrate Evening Prayer simply and with greater complexity and use music in the context of

Liturgies of Reconciliation. Those who completed the whole course received a certificate from Bishop Declan as a mark of his appreciation and their commitment.

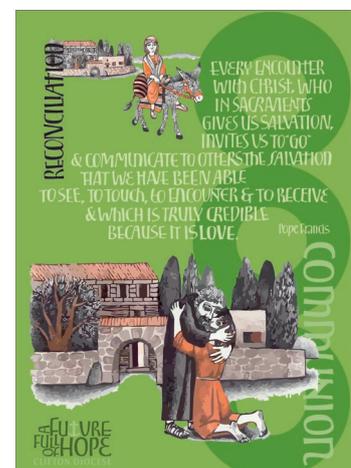
It is hoped that this course can be developed and offered to other deaneries around the diocese. If your parish/deanery is interested in hosting such a course please do get in touch and we will endeavour to respond positively.

Lent Reconciliation Services

As in previous years, Bishop Declan invites us to join him during this season of Lent to celebrate the abundant mercy of God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Why not join him at one of the five venues across our diocese as part of your Lenten Pilgrimage? These liturgies will each begin at 7pm and will be held as follows:

- Tuesday 3 March - St Luke & St Teresa, Wincanton
- Thursday 12 March – St Patrick, Redfield
- Thursday 17 March – St John, Trowbridge
- Thursday 26 March - Holy Rood, Swindon
- Thursday 2 April - St Gregory, Cheltenham

Many parishes will have a liturgy of reconciliation during Lent with the opportunity for individual confession. These can be a rich and rewarding experiences when we are helped to remember that we are not alone in our need to say sorry or find



healing. We know that when we sin not only our relationship with God is damaged but it hurts others and the community. Preparing for the sacrament in the company of others, by reflecting on readings, singing appropriate music and joining in prayer, strengthens us in our desire to meet God in our sorrow and vulnerability. The joy of unburdening ourselves allows us to continue on our journey to Easter so that when it comes we are ready and able to rejoice with Christ on resurrection day. You will find a couple of different examples of parish Reconciliation Services on the Liturgy Office website [here](#) and [here](#).

Pope Paul VI – a note for your Liturgical Diary.

Pope Francis has added Pope Paul VI to the liturgical calendar as an optional memorial on 29 May. For details of the Mass, readings and Divine Office for that day see [here](#)

Webpage

Please do explore this [webpage](#). You will find a range of resources and articles which are designed to help with the formation, support and development of the liturgical life of our parishes, schools and institutions. If there is something you would like to see but which doesn't appear to be included, please just let us know.