



Our Lady and St Gerard's Lostock Hall

NEWS AND VIEWS

Our Lady of Lourdes:

Issue No 636 February 2021

In 1858 the Immaculate Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous near Lourdes in France, in the grotto of Massabielle. Through the poor child, Mary called sinners to penance, and thereby there arose in the Church a marvellous spirit of prayer and charity, especially in helping the poor and the sick.



Our Lady of Lourdes 11th February

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Lent 2021 — 17th February to 3rd April

Pope Francis' Ash Wednesday Homily 2020



We begin the Lenten Season by receiving ashes: “You are dust, and to dust you shall return (cf. *Gen 3:19*). The dust sprinkled on our heads brings us back to earth; it reminds us that we are dust and to dust we shall return. We are weak, frail and mortal. Centuries and millennia pass and we come and go; before the immensity of galaxies and space, we are nothing. We are dust in the universe. Yet we are *dust loved by God*. It pleased the Lord to gather that dust in his hands and to breathe into it the breath of life (cf. *Gen 2:7*). We are thus a dust that is precious, destined for eternal life. We are the dust of the earth, upon which God has poured out his heaven, the dust that contains his dreams. We are

God’s hope, his treasure and his glory.

Ashes are thus a reminder of the direction of our existence: a passage *from dust to life*. We are dust, earth, clay, but if we allow ourselves to be shaped by the hands of God, we become something wondrous. More often than not, though, especially at times of difficulty and loneliness, we only see our dust! But the Lord encourages us: in his eyes, our littleness is of infinite value. So let us take heart: we were born to be loved; we were born to be children of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, may we keep this in mind as we begin this Lenten season. For Lent is not a time for useless sermons, but for recognizing that our lowly ashes are loved by God. It is a time of grace, a time for letting God gaze upon us with love and in this way *change our lives*. We were put in this world to go from ashes to life. So let us not turn our hopes and God’s dream for us into powder and ashes. Let us not grow resigned. You may ask: “How can I trust? The world is falling to pieces, fear is growing, there is so much malice all around us, society is becoming less and less Christian...” Don’t you believe that God can transform our dust into glory?

The ashes we receive on our foreheads should affect the thoughts passing through our minds. They remind us that, as God's children, we cannot spend our lives chasing after dust. From there a question can pass into our hearts: "What am I living for?" If it is for the fleeting realities of this world, I am going back to ashes and dust, rejecting what God has done in my life. If I live only to earn money, to have a good time, to gain a bit of prestige or a promotion in my work, I am living for dust. If I am unhappy with life because I think I do not get enough respect or receive what I think is my due, then I am simply staring at dust.

That is not why we have been put in this world. We are worth so much more. We live for so much more, for we are meant to make God's dream a reality and to love. Ashes are sprinkled on our heads so that the fire of love can be kindled in our hearts. We are citizens of heaven, and our love for God and neighbour is our passport to heaven. Our earthly possessions will prove useless, dust that scatters, but the love we share – in our families, at work, in the Church and in the world – will save us, for it will endure forever.



The ashes we receive remind us of a second and opposite passage: *from life to dust*. All around us, we see the dust of death. Lives reduced to ashes. Rubble, destruction, war. The lives of unwelcomed innocents, the lives of the excluded poor, the lives of the abandoned elderly. We continue to destroy ourselves, to return to ashes and dust. And how much dust there is in our relationships! Look at our homes and families: our quarrels, our inability to resolve conflicts, our unwillingness to apologize, to forgive, to start over, while at the same time insisting on our own freedom and our rights! All this dust that besmirches our love and mars our life. Even in the Church, the house of God, we have let so much dust collect, the dust of worldliness.

Let us look inside, into our hearts: how many times do we extinguish the fire of God with the ashes of hypocrisy! *Hypocrisy* is the filth that Jesus tells us in today's Gospel that we have to remove. Indeed, the Lord tells us not only to carry out works of charity, to pray and to fast, but also to do these without pretence, duplicity and hypocrisy (cf. *Mt* 6:2.5.16). Yet how often do we do things only to be recognized, to look good, to satisfy our ego! How often do we profess

to be Christians, yet in our hearts readily yield to passions that enslave us! How often do we preach one thing and practice another! How many times do we make ourselves look good on the outside while nursing grudges within! How much duplicity do we have in our hearts... All this is dust that besmirches, ashes that extinguish the fire of love.

We need to be cleansed of all the dust that has sullied our hearts. How? The urgent summons of Saint Paul in today's second reading can help us. Paul says: "Be reconciled to God!" He does not simply ask; he begs: "We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). We would have said: "Reconcile yourselves with God!" But no, Paul uses passive form: *Be reconciled!* Holiness is not achieved by our efforts, for it is grace! By ourselves, we cannot remove the dust that sullies our hearts. Only Jesus, who knows and loves our heart, can heal it. Lent is a time of healing.

What, then, are we to do? In journeying towards Easter, we can make two passages: first, *from dust to life*, from our fragile humanity to the humanity of Jesus, who heals us. We can halt in contemplation before the crucified Lord and repeat: "Jesus, you love me, transform me... Jesus, you love me, transform me..." And once we have received his love, once we have wept at the thought of that love, we can make the second passage, by determining never to fall again *from life into dust*. We can receive God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance, because there the fire of God's love consumes the ashes of our sin. The embrace of the Father in confession renews us from inside and purifies our heart. May we allow ourselves to be reconciled, in order to live as beloved children, as forgiven and healed sinners, as wayfarers with him at our side.

Let us allow ourselves to be loved, so that we can give love in return. Let us allow ourselves to stand up and walk towards Easter. Then we will experience the joy of discovering how God raises us up from our ashes.

Pope Francis' Guide to Lent: What You Should Give Up in 2020

Christians around the world mark the beginning of Lent with the celebration of Ash Wednesday. This ancient day and season has a surprising modern appeal. Priests and pastors often tell you that outside of Christmas, more people show up to church on Ash Wednesday than any other day of the year—including Easter. But this

mystique isn't reserved for Christians alone. The customs that surround the season have a quality to them that transcend religion.

Perhaps most notable is the act of fasting. While Catholics fast on Ash Wednesday and on Fridays during the Lenten season, many people—religious or not—take up this increasingly popular discipline during the year.



But Pope Francis has asked us to reconsider the heart of this activity this Lenten season. According to Francis, fasting must never become superficial. He often quotes the early Christian mystic John Chrysostom who said: "No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no

matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good to others, you do nothing great."

But this isn't to downplay the role of sacrifice during the Lenten season. Lent is a good time for penance and self-denial. But once again, Francis reminds us that these activities must truly enrich others: "I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt."

So, if we're going to fast from anything this Lent, Francis suggests that even more than candy or alcohol, we fast from indifference towards others.

In his annual Lenten message for 2020, the pope writes, "Indifference to our neighbour and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience."

Describing this phenomenon he calls the *globalization of indifference*, Francis writes that "whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades."

He continues that, "We end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own."

But when we fast from this indifference, we can begin to feast on love. In fact, Lent is the perfect time to learn how to love again. Jesus—the great protagonist of this holy season—certainly showed us the way. In him, God descends all the way down to bring everyone up. In his life and his ministry, no one is excluded.

"What are you giving up for Lent?" It's a question a lot of people will get these next few days. If you want to change your body, perhaps alcohol and candy is the way to go. But if you want to change your heart, a harder fast is needed. This narrow road is gritty, but it isn't sterile. It will make room in ourselves to experience a love that can make us whole and set us free. Now that's something worth fasting for.

FACT

The Church does not officially promote the concept of 'cheat days' during Lent. However, Lent is traditionally considered 40 days long, even though the time between **Ash Wednesday** and Easter is actually 46 days. **This is because Sundays are not considered part of Lent.**

Remember

People can get cranky when they don't get what they want, especially over the Lenten season.

So please, take pity on your family & friends during Lent; they're sacrificing their vices for the betterment of their spiritual health.

It's also a "time that the Lord invites us to come back home, come back to the Church," according to Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of New York.

Of course at the present time the Sunday Obligation has been lifted temporarily.

CAFOD: Lenten family fast day.

This year family fast day falls on Friday 26th February. On this day we are asked to eat/drink a little less and give the money we save to CAFOD in solidarity with those who face great difficulties accessing adequate food and water.

We are aware that many people in our local area are struggling financially given the Covid crisis and its resultant economic chaos but in order to build a more just society we have to look further at those in the developing world and dig deep.

This year CAFOD's project is focusing on water. 1 in 3 people (2.2 billion) have no access to safe drinking water and 1 in 8 of the world's population don't have access to basic toilet and washing facilities.

To take just one example, Abdella, living in the remote Afar region of Ethiopia, walks 10 miles every day in blistering heat to collect water for his family. This journey is hazardous and very time-consuming which means Abdella has little spare time to try and break out of this cycle of endless struggle and poverty. You can follow his journey on: <https://projects.cafod.org.uk/walkforwater/index.html>

It's very moving and spells out how unjustly the world's resources are spread. 70 per cent of Afari children are deprived of access to clean water which contributes to cholera, malnutrition, and decreased livestock productivity. The story also demonstrates in a very simple way the devastating effects climate change is having on such underdeveloped and remote areas of the world.

Abebe Belachew, CAFOD's climate change and adaptation officer in Addis Ababa, works with a group of well-known and trusted local aid professionals in areas such as Afar to effect change. Because CAFOD is part of the Caritas Catholic Church network, one of the largest aid networks in the world, it can reach out to areas other organisations might struggle to access. It is important to stress however that CAFOD help everyone regardless of faith.

This year the pandemic is creating uncertainty even about whether churches will be open later in February, and obviously we cannot have a collection and appeal in the normal way. Fr Joe is asking that we try, as far as possible, to encourage direct giving.

You can give online at: CAFOD.org.uk/give

You can also give by texting LENT to 70460. If you wish to give £10 you would text:

LENT10 to 70460, £15 text LENT15 to 70460 and so on. All donations can be gift aided of course if you are a tax payer. After your initial text, you will be given instructions as to how to proceed with this.

I will also leave a few envelopes at the back of church for those who feel unable to give this way. You can either send these off directly to CAFOD as the envelopes are free post, putting in the completed slips of course, or you can give them to Mick or me and we'll send them unopened to Romero House in the parish envelope.

As this is highlighting water poverty, CAFOD have organised an event on Saturday 20th February at 2.00pm where parishioners are encouraged to walk 5 miles alongside Abdella. People can of course sponsor you for this project. Anyone can do this and to take part go to CAFOD.org.uk/walk

As our contribution to the Walk for Water project Mick and I are going to set up a 'just giving' page on Facebook and ask sponsors to donate to CAFOD on behalf of the parish. We are hoping to raise £750, as this is sufficient to provide a community water supply. Our challenge for Lent is to walk 10,000 steps(5 miles) a day for the 40 days of Lent.

Further details to follow on the weekly notice sheet a little nearer the time.

Thank you and Take Care

Margaret Cronin

John Corrigan

John (my uncle) died on 22nd December and his funeral took place at the end of January. He was a parishioner of St Gerard's for many years until he moved to Preston and St Maria Gorretti parish. He was one of our collectors and often rang the Church bell. His wife (my Aunt) and two of his children are buried in our Cemetery. I am sure there will be some who remember his time here. **John Corrigan**

Parish Organisations

BOWLING CLUB

This month I am looking back 40 years with an excerpt from The Bowling Club history which is available on the Parish website.

February 1981 – Bowling Green Project

“We would like to thank Fr. Forbes for his support and encouragement in this scheme. Whilst we hope to make a Bowling Green which will be used by any parishioner, Fr. Forbes has wider plans for this piece of ground. He hopes that it will be used by all parishioners as a beautiful garden, not as it was becoming, a wilderness, especially behind the Grotto which was quite a dangerous area for children.

About 10 men, young and old have worked extremely hard during the past two months. They have done a mountain of work. We are glad to see 3 under 20 year olds helping. Let’s not forget that the present Youth of the Parish will reap the most benefit. We would like to thank the two people who have given donations. One of £25 and one of £10 which has swelled our funds to £52. The Bowling Club is committed to organising Fund Raising efforts. In February we plan to have a Whist Drive on

Tuesday 3rd. Then on Friday 20th February we hope to have an Old Time Dance run by Wilf Seddon.

We would be most grateful if any other Parish organisations would like to do something to swell our funds. All money received will be faithfully accounted for. All expenditure properly recorded and an up to date financial statement will be reported each month. Besides which we shall need helpers to dig trenches for drains, help to level the ground, make surrounds and fences and plan and plant shrubs and flowers. Finally this garden will be for your benefit, so we would like you to take an interest. As the weather gets better come and see what is happening.”

Finances were a problem. So we did all sorts of things. We sold roast potatoes in the Centre roasted in the bonfires of rubbish. We sold Holly, held Whist and Domino Drives. There were raffles outside Church, we ran sweepstakes. Then there was the great generosity of those people who gave us donations. Raffles were held at Wednesday night Bingo.

W R Hesmondhalgh

Parish Directory

Father Joseph Gee
Sister Louise Shields RNDM
The Presbytery
17C Browndedge Road
Lostock Hall
Preston
PR5 5AA
Tel: 01772 335387

In an Emergency please phone
either

St Marys Browndedge 335168
St Mary's Leyland 455955
St Catherine's Farrington
421174

St Patricks W-L-Dale 253709 or
St Teresa's Penwortham on

Contacts

743337
The Primary School 335025

Weekly Services

Sundays:

Saturday Vigil 6:00 p.m.
Sunday 10:00 a.m.

Weekdays:

Monday 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday 9:15 a.m.
Wednesday 9:15 a.m.
Thursday 9:15 p.m.
Friday NO MASS.

Holydays:

Eve 6:30 p.m.
Day 9:15 a.m.

Reconciliation: Confessions
before Weekend Masses.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Monday 18:00 to 18:30

Baptisms

Are normally conducted on the first and third Sunday of each month at 12:00 noon. Baptism Preparations currently take place every few months on two successive Wednesday evenings at 7 pm. Please telephone the Parish Priest or Sister on 335387 for details.

No Priest! What do we do?

If there is an Emergency and no Priest is available for the weekend Masses, the Eucharistic Ministers, particularly those who have been trained, will perform a Holy Communion Service and this will replace the Mass. Please note that this is **Only in an Emergency** and there is no time to arrange for another priest or no other is Priest is available. There may be occasions when the 8.30am Mass on a Sunday is cancelled, but the Saturday 6pm and Sunday 10am Masses will be as usual.

Marriages

At least six months notification of Marriage is required. Pre-marriage instruction is mandatory and organised by the Diocese. Please tele-

Parish Organisations

CONTACT

Advertising	John Corrigan	316295
Altar Servers	David Walker	629701
A.P.F.& Sacristan	Christine Flanagan	334723
Blessed Sacrament Guild		335387
Bowling Club	Warwick Hesmondhalgh	339700
CAFOD	Margaret Cronin	336475
Catechists & Sacramental Programme		335387
Children's Liturgy Group	Bridget Nisbet	324740
Choir	Jim Stokes	316574
Organist	Neil Coupe	322976
Drama Group	Grace Robinson	337844
Eucharistic Ministers & Readers	Michael Quinlan	467306
Flowers	Irene Crook	611513
Football Club	Phil Tinsley	07775890667
Fund Raising Group		335387
Gift Aid	John Robinson	335387
News & Views, Website , Printers	David Walker	629701
Majella Companions	Sister Louise	335387
Marriage Registrars	Margaret Cronin	336475
	Ann Quinlan	467306
Parochial Centre	Frank Redfearn	338285
Piety Shop	Vivian Page	313910
P.T.A.	Ross Free	339691
Sacred Heart Guild	Mary Hardman	468311
Safeguarding Officer	Colette Kingswood	07769690874
	or Colette.kingswood@virginmedia.com	
School (Staff, Ancillaries & Governors)	Jackie McNally	335025
Senior Citizens Organisers	Linda Walsh	311654
	Gloria Duffell	339966
Youth Representative	Lee McNulty	07478703414

Items for News & Views can be left at the Presbytery or emailed to the editor at newsviews@saintgerards.org.uk The last day for submissions is the 20th of each month.

www.saintgerards.org.uk

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St Mary's, Brownedge
Live Streaming Times
<https://www.churchservices.tv/bamberbridge>

Sunday	Mass	9:30 am 11:00 & 6:30 pm
Monday to Friday	Mass	9:30 am
Private Prayer	Tuesday Thursday	3:00 pm to 4:00 pm 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm
	Rosary	8.00 pm
Saturday	Mass	9:30 am 7 pm Vigil
Sunday	Mass	9:30 am 11:00 & 6:30 pm

Parish Diary

7th	5th Sunday of the Year
8th	St Josephine Bakhita
10th	St Scholastica
11th	Our Lady of Lourdes
14th	6th Sunday of the Year
17th	Ash Wednesday Holy Day of Obligation Day of Fasting & Abstinence
21st	First Sunday of Lent
22nd	The Chair of St Peter
28th	Second Sunday of Lent
1st March	St David
7th	Third Sunday of Lent

EMAIL ADDRESS

We have changed our parish email address and are introducing a few more contacts in the near future. The main email is now :
office@saintgerards.org.uk
 &

News and Views email is now:
newsnview@saintgerards.org.



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