



## *Our Vision is a Person, Our Vision is Jesus Christ* 22nd February 2026: FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

### SOMETHING NEW IS HAPPENING

Lent begins this week, and something new is happening in our world: it is subtle and silent, yet powerful. On these mornings, on the way to St Edward's Church for the 'Come and See' half-term club with the kids, I see a flourishing mimosa tree with beautiful yellow flowers contrasting with the grey sky after a smooth turn in the road. While praying the daily rosary in the park near our home these mornings, a crowd of violet crocuses emerging from the green grass blades catches my eye. On my way to Romsey, I see bunches of yellow daffodils decorating even the black, wet tarmac beside a roundabout. After two sunny days, which broke the so called 45-day-England-2026 flood, I was reminded of the true green colours of nature. It can't rain forever!

Amidst our daily routines, something new is happening, reminiscent of the prophet Isaiah, where the Lord says, "See, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"

Nature is in the midst of its most joyful and demanding effort. Seeds rot in order to produce stems and flowers full of hope for the fruits to come. Trees silently circulate their sap to fill their bare branches with gems. Wood pigeons are chirping again, looking for partners and shelter in which to raise their young. Sunrises slowly enlighten people as they wake up, and dinners are illuminated by the last rays of light.

All the rain, wind and cold, winter's last attempt to keep nature still as death, could not stop this ongoing renewal. Daylight, with its warmth, is growing inexorably, and nighttime is decreasing day after day. Stems are growing and flowers are blooming.

"See, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"

Lent is our natural, spiritual and fully human way of participating in the great cosmic liturgy that our Creator is celebrating. The Creator is giving his creation the power to conquer the bleak, still and dead winter to live again, to bloom again, to be glorious again. While Christmas celebrates Christ as the light that guides humanity out of the darkness of sin, Easter celebrates Christ as life, victorious over death and sin. Lent is our way of participating in Christ's victory.

So, during this time, as I think of my Lord, who is eager to glorify me as the Father glorified His Son, Jesus Christ, I often think of a famous saying of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon: *'The glory of God is man fully alive, and the true life of man is to see God.'*

The whole natural world gives its all to glorify the Lord, displaying its finest colours, shapes and fragrances as it basks in the sunlight and bears fruit. I am given the same grace during Lent. Recentring myself in God and focusing on the Lenten commitments will allow Him to make me a man fully alive, which is all I desire. So, I want to be like one of those blooming flowers.

May all that separates me from His light rot like a crocus seed. May my spirit turn towards His glory through fasting, almsgiving and prayer, just as the crocus produces its stem and flower. The time to bloom has come. It is Lent.

Fr Pietro

### GEM OF THE WEEK

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FOR LENT 2026

If anyone has suggestions for GEMs please contact [website.sswp@gmail.com](mailto:website.sswp@gmail.com)



For the next Newsletter, items should be received into the Parish Office by **10am on Tuesday 24th February 2026**, please email your messages/notices to: [office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

If you wish to make a donation to our parish please go to: <https://www.stswithunwellsparish.org.uk/financesdonations>

# LITURGICAL INDICATIONS



Sunday 22nd February 2026 YEAR A - YEAR 2 - PSALTER WEEK 1

PSALM RESPONSE: HAVE MERCY ON US, O LORD, FOR WE HAVE SINNED.

1st Reading Genesis 2:7-9;3:1-7 Psalm 51 (50) 2nd Reading Romans 5:12-19 Gospel Matthew 4:1-11

Sunday 1st March 2026 YEAR A - YEAR 2 - PSALTER WEEK 2

PSALM RESPONSE: MAY YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE BE UPON US, AS WE HOPE IN YOU, O LORD.

1st Reading Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 33(32) 2nd Reading 2nd Timothy 1:8b-10 Gospel Matthew 17:1-9

## MESSAGES



### Message about the closure of St Swithun Wells Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I know that this news has brought sadness to many, not only within that community but across our whole parish family of six churches. In his letter of 26th January 2026, the Bishop explains that, "after a sustained period of prayer, consultation, and careful consideration... I have taken the difficult decision to close St Swithun Wells Church... for regular public worship."

He is clear that this decision "is not a judgement on the faith, generosity, or commitment of those who have worshipped in this church over many years," but reflects "the pastoral reality of the parish today and the need to plan responsibly for the future."

The last Mass at St Swithun Wells Church will be celebrated on Saturday 14th March at 5pm. I warmly invite parishioners from across the parish to join us on that day as we give thanks for the many graces received there: baptisms, marriages, funerals, and countless quiet moments of prayer.

The Bishop reminds us that "the Church is not the building alone, but the living Body of Christ, gathered around the Eucharist and sent out on mission: 'You yourselves are God's building' (1 Corinthians 3:9)"

Please take time to read the Bishop's full letter on our parish website. Let us pray for one another, especially for those most affected, and ask the Lord to guide us as we continue to build up His Church together.

With my prayers and blessing, Fr Raffaele.

**Parish Registration** - Please make sure that you register yourself and your children to our Parish using the online form that you can find on our website. Please note there is one form for adults and a separate one for children. You can also use the QR codes below that will take you to the online form directly. Thank you to those who have already completed this. For queries, please contact Christina at

[accounts@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:accounts@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)



Adult Parishioner Registration



Child Parishioner Registration

**Lenten Lunch in aid of CAFOD** will be commencing on Friday 27th February and every Friday in Lent at St Edward's, from 12 Noon until 1.30pm. All donations will go to CAFOD'S funds helping all who are in need due to famine, climate change, wars and disasters. Your support will be greatly appreciated.

**Romsey Lent Lunch in aid of CAFOD** - It will be held in the United Reformed Church hall on Friday 6th March from 12noon - 1.30pm. If you would like to help or to donate towards the cost of the food, please speak to Jean Prescott, Kathy Thompson or Rosemary Peacock after weekend Masses.

**Lent Parish Retreat** - We will hold a Parish Retreat for Lent on Saturday 7th March, 2.30pm-4.30pm at St Edward. Open to everyone. There will be a talk about Lent, some time for private prayer in the church and a time for questions and sharing of thoughts.

### Stations of the Cross During Lent

**St Andrew: Tuesdays at 9.30am (before Mass);**  
**Holy Cross: Thursdays at 9am (before Mass);**  
**St Joseph: Fridays at 9.30am (before Mass);**  
**St Edward: Fridays at 9.30am (before Mass);**  
**OLOA: Fridays at 11.15am (before Mass).**

### Weekday Masses & Eucharistic Adoration

One of the pillars of Lent is prayer.

A simple way to do this is to attend Mass on weekdays or to participate in one of our Eucharistic Adorations. On Tuesdays in St Edward for example, there is Mass at 6pm with Eucharistic Adoration afterwards. On Wednesdays there is Mass in Holy Cross at 9.30am followed by Eucharistic Adoration. At St Joseph there is Mass every Thursday at 6pm and Eucharistic Adoration one hour before from 5pm-6pm. At OLOA there is Eucharistic Adoration (after Mass) at 12.30pm every Thursday.

**Penitential Services** - A number of priests will be available during these times:

Saturday 14th March, 4.00pm at OLOA

Friday 20th March, 7.30pm at St Andrew

Saturday 21st March, 10am at Holy Cross

### Upcoming Funeral Service - Wednesday 25th

February at 11.30am in St Edwards. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Peter Sutton and for his family.

**OLOA Social event postponed** - Originally announced for Friday 27th March, this even has been postponed until April, date to be confirmed. Apologies for any inconvenience.

## MESSAGES CONTINUED



**Works in Holy Cross** - started on Monday 16th February for two to three months whilst repairs are made to the external structure of the church. For this reason, there will be some scaffolding during this period.

**CAFOD Lent Appeal - Family Fast Day collection**  
**Family Fast Day is on Friday 27th February.**  
Please donate to our Family Fast Day parish collection. Please use the CAFOD envelope in church, donate online at [cafod.org.uk/envelope](http://cafod.org.uk/envelope) or call 0303 303 3030. You will be able to hand in the CAFOD envelopes during the second collection on **28th Feb/1st March**. Please do not use the yellow gift aid envelopes for this collection.

**Parish Pilgrimage to Lisbon & Fatima**  
Just a reminder to everyone who is going on the pilgrimage that the balance for the trip needs to be paid by **28th February**. All details for how to do this can be found in the email you received from All Saints Travel.

**Church Flower Arranging in St Swithun Wells Parish** - This is a coffee morning invitation being held at **St Edward's Church on Saturday 28th February, 10am to 11.30am**. All are welcome, particularly those who wish to consider joining our flower arranging teams Parish wide, regardless of age or ability. We appreciate that we all have other commitments over the week but we can assure you that on joining one of our teams, you will foster friendship, deepen your faith and have fun. If you are interested in coming along to find out more, or just to watch several flower demonstrations, please contact Jean Viola on mobile 07919128776 or email to [jeanviola@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jeanviola@yahoo.co.uk)

**Parish Get2Gether - Sunday 1st March 1-4pm Pavilion in the Park**. An event for all of the parish, especially families. We begin at 1pm, sharing a meal together followed by some activities and a discussion. No cost, however we kindly ask you to give a donation to cover the hire of the Pavilion. Please bring some food, beverages or cakes to share with others. Please can you bring your own cups/plates/cutlery. Please include a list of ingredients so those with allergies can make an informed decision. To book your place please go to our parish website.

**Suggested reading** - for the next couple of months we suggest the following book: *Catholicism: A Journey To The Heart of The Faith* by Bishop Robert Barron.

**New parish blog** - We now have a blog on our website. We are also on Facebook and Instagram and you can follow us at [@stswithunwellsparish](https://www.facebook.com/stswithunwellsparish) for all the latest news and events in the parish.

### **Safeguarding Coordinator Needed – Holy Cross Church**

Holy Cross Church is seeking a volunteer to serve as Safeguarding Coordinator. This is an important role in helping to ensure that our church remains a safe and welcoming place for children, young people, and vulnerable adults. The coordinator acts as a point of contact within the church and works alongside the diocesan safeguarding team. The volunteer must be a regular member of the congregation at Holy Cross Church. If you are interested speak to Fr Raffaele or contact the parish office: [office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

### **Volunteer Property Manager(s) Needed**

Our parish is seeking volunteers who may be interested in serving as a Property Manager for one of our churches. This important role involves helping to oversee the care and maintenance of church buildings and grounds, liaising with contractors where necessary, and ensuring that our properties are kept safe and well maintained. If you feel you may be able to help, we would be very pleased to speak with you about which church and what the role would involve. If you are interested please speak to Fr Raffaele or contact the parish office: [office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

### **Chair of Property Managers Committee Needed**

Our parish is seeking a volunteer to serve as Chair of the Property Managers Committee. This important role involves coordinating and supporting the work of the Property Managers of the different churches, helping to ensure good communication, shared planning, and the careful stewardship of our parish properties. Support and guidance will be provided. If you are interested, or would like to find out more about what the role involves, please speak to Fr Raffaele or contact the parish office: [office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

#### **TIMES A PRIEST WILL BE AVAILABLE TO MEET**

**Tuesdays:** Fr Raffaele, 3.30pm-5.30pm, Holy Cross Resource Centre, Eastleigh;  
**Wednesdays:** Fr Luca by appointment, 3.30pm-5.30pm, Holy Cross Resource Centre, Eastleigh;  
**Fridays:** Fr Mario 10am-12 Noon, OLQA, Bishop's Waltham;  
**Fridays:** Fr Pietro, 11am-12.45pm, 26A Abbey Water, Romsey;  
**Fridays:** Fr Matteo, 11am-12.30pm, Holy Cross Resource Centre, Eastleigh.

#### **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION)**

**Tuesday:** 9.30am-10.00am (before Mass) St Andrew  
**Tuesday:** 6.30pm-7.30pm (after Mass) St Edward  
**Saturday:** 10.00am-10.30am (after Mass) Holy Cross  
5.30pm-6.00pm (before Mass) OLQA  
5.30pm-6.00pm (before Mass) St Joseph  
**Sunday:** 8.30am-9.00am (before Mass) St Edward  
8.30am-9.00am (before Mass) St Andrew

## MASS TIMES FOR OUR CHURCH COMMUNITIES

DATE	TIME	CHURCH	MASS INTENTION
Sat 21st February	9.30am 5.00pm 6.00pm 6.00pm 6.30pm	Holy Cross St Swithun Wells OLQA St Joseph St Edward	Daisy (Special Intention) Agnes Carter RIP (10th Anniversary) Jan Helena Ferenc RIP Paul Gardner RIP Evert van Willigenburg (Wellbeing)
Sun 22nd February <i>First Sunday of Lent</i>	8.30am 9.00am 9.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 5.30pm	Holy Cross St Edward St Andrew OLQA Holy Cross (& livestreamed) St Joseph Holy Cross	<i>Polska Msza Święta</i> People of the Parish Ramon & Nelita Hechanova RIP  Elizabeth (Special Intention & Wellbeing) Tony Porter RIP
Mon 23rd February	9.30am	Holy Cross	
Tues 24th February	10.00am 6.00pm	St Andrew St Edward	Benedict Matthias RIP
Weds 25th February	9.30am 10am <u>11.30am</u>	Holy Cross St Edward <u>St Edward</u>	<u>Funeral Service Peter Sutton</u>
Thurs 26th February	9.30am 12 Noon 6.00pm	Holy Cross OLQA St Joseph	Our families & their wellbeing
Fri 27th February	10.00am 10.00am 12 Noon	St Joseph St Edward OLQA	Sr Rosa RIP
Sat 28th February	9.30am 5.00pm 6.00pm 6.00pm 6.30pm	Holy Cross St Swithun Wells OLQA St Joseph St Edward	Selby & Kathleen Fawcett RIP  People of the Parish John Whitcher RIP
Sun 1st March <i>Second Sunday of Lent</i>	8.30am 9.00am 9.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 5.30pm	Holy Cross St Edward St Andrew OLQA Holy Cross (& livestreamed) St Joseph Holy Cross	<i>Polska Msza Święta</i> Denis McCormack RIP Angela and Alfredo Pantanella RIP  Tony Kelly RIP

### CLERGY & PARISH OFFICE

Fr Raffaele Cossa (Parish Priest)  
Tel: 023 8061 2430; E: [rcossa@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:rcossa@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Fr Luca Speziale (Assistant Priest)  
Tel: 023 8061 2430; E: [lspeziale@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:lspeziale@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Fr Mario Toma (Assistant Priest)  
Tel: 023 8061 2430; E: [mtoma@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:mtoma@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Fr Matteo Pagani (Assistant Priest)  
Tel: 023 8061 2430; E: [mpagani@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:mpagani@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Fr Pietro Paiusco (Assistant Priest)  
Tel: 023 8061 2430; E: [ppaiusco@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:ppaiusco@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Deacon Bob Birtles  
Tel: 023 8069 2416; E: [bbirtles@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:bbirtles@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Deacon John di Meo  
Tel: 01794 515688; E: [jdimeo@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:jdimeo@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Deacon Paul Owen  
Tel: 023 8025 4806; E: [powen@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:powen@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Deacon Paul Wilson  
Tel: 023 8061 6618; E: [pwilson@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:pwilson@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Deacon Emmanuel Chituh  
Tel: 07915 379686; E: [echituh@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:echituh@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

**Parish Office** Holy Cross Church, 53 Leigh Road, Eastleigh,  
SO50 9DF Tel: 02380 273882  
Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri 9.30am - 5.30pm; Wed 9.30am - 2.30pm

**Parish Administrator:** Sabrina Gardner  
Email: [office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:office@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

**Finance Administrator:** Christina Geleji  
Email: [accounts@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:accounts@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

**Events & Communications Co-ordinator:** Faye Harris  
Email: [events@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk](mailto:events@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk)

**Website Contact:** [website.sswp@gmail.com](mailto:website.sswp@gmail.com)

**Safeguarding:** Please see Safeguarding posters in each of our churches for details of the Parish Safeguarding Reps. Diocesan Safeguarding: Ruth Atfield [rattfield@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:rattfield@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)