



Our Vision is a Person, Our Vision is Jesus Christ
15th February 2026: SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CARNIVAL

During this period, one thing that normally happened in my region in Italy close to Venice, but does not exist here in England, is the carnival celebration. The motto during the celebration was: "A carnevale ogni scherzo vale". Clearly, the English translation does not rhyme, but it means that at carnival, any kind of joke goes. This became an opportunity to play all kinds of pranks, even some terrible ones. One of the nastiest pranks was to break a stink bomb in a busy place, such as a shop or at school. We would buy vials of a yellowish liquid, and when the vial broke, it would smell so badly that it made you want to run away.

Yet Carnival was not only a time for pranks, but also for beauty, floats and fantasy. There were families who built floats with huge figures every year. As they paraded through the town, they threw sweets and we children ran around like crazy to collect as many as possible.

The origins of carnival in Venice and the surrounding area are very ancient, but among the various reasons for its creation, one was the fact that during that period people could wear masks and thus, in anonymity, social differences disappeared, so it was a way of being on the same level for at least a few days. The most commonly used mask for the occasion was the *Bautta*: a black tricorn hat and an expressionless white mask to emphasise the equality between people.

Obviously, this also had negative consequences, such as abuse, because by wearing masks, people could commit minor crimes without being recognised. In any case, the most important feature of carnival is that it is a celebration that precedes Lent. The name itself has a Latin origin, emphasising the consumption of meat (*carne*) before the abstinence of Lent.

Another typical Carnival foods in my region are *i crostoi* and *e fritoe* (Venetian spoken), two desserts that are only prepared during this period and are very sweet, to put on a little more weight before the fast on Ash Wednesday.

What more can I say? This year, Lent begins very early, next Wednesday (Ash Wednesday), so we have now only the next three days to celebrate a little before the rigours of Lent. But the good news is that we do not need to wear masks, because Jesus revealed to us that we have one Father, so we are all brothers and sisters at the same level, despite all the differences that are present in our multicultural community. It is precisely the unity among us that makes even the rigorous period of Lent easier.

Fr Mario

GEM OF THE WEEK

THE PAIN OF 'WHY?' BY BISHOP ERIC VARDEN

If anyone has suggestions for GEMs please contact website.sswp@gmail.com



For the next Newsletter, items should be received into the Parish Office by 10am on Tuesday
17th February 2026, please email your messages/notices to: 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 15th February 2026 YEAR A - YEAR 2 - PSALTER WEEK 2

PSALM RESPONSE: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO WALK IN THE LAW OF THE LORD!

1st Reading Sirach 15:15-20 Psalm 119 (118) 2nd Reading 1st Corinthians 2:6-10 Gospel Matthew 5:17-37

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



MESSAGES

Message about the closure of St Swithun Wells Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last weekend at St Swithun Wells Church I read to the congregation the letter from Bishop Philip announcing his decision to close St Swithun Wells Church, Fair Oak, for regular public worship. 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.

Gift Aid Coordinator For Holy Cross needed - We are looking for a volunteer who can process Gift Aid claims so the Parish can reclaim tax on donations. If you are interested, please email Christina

accounts@stswithunwellsparish.org.uk

The Knitting Group - 3rd Tuesday of every month. Next meeting is on the 17th February, 2-4pm, Holy Cross Resource Centre. Knitting hats, scarves and gloves for the homeless. All are welcome.

Change Mass Time in OLQA - Please note that on Thursday 19th February Mass in OLQA will be at 10am instead of 12noon. There will not be Eucharistic Adoration.

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



Adult Parishioner Registration



Child Parishioner Registration

Rules for Ash Wednesday & Lent

On Ash Wednesday (18th February) Roman Catholics must fast and abstain from meat. Fasting means reducing considerably the amount of food we eat (e.g. having just one meal) and abstinence means abstaining from eating meat. The law of fasting applies to anyone aged 18-60. The law of abstinence applies to those who are over 14. Roman Catholics must also abstain from eating meat on all Fridays during Lent. Please read the time of Ash Wednesday Masses on the back page.

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.

Parish Financial Summary Sept 2024-August 2025

This weekend you will receive with the Newsletter a summary of St Swithun Wells parish finances for 2024/2025, please read carefully and if you have any questions please contact Fr Raffaele.

MESSAGES CONTINUED

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);
OLQA: 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 OLQA 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 OLQA
Friday 20th March, 7.30pm at St Andrew
Saturday 21st March, 10am at Holy Cross

Works in Holy Cross - will start 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.

Rite of Election, St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth
Please pray for the adults from our parish who will be baptised, confirmed or received into full communion with the Church at Easter. They will be acknowledged by the Bishop at this weekend's Rite of Election, **Saturday 21st February**.

Street Pastors - Volunteers needed for Eastleigh and Fair Oak. Could you spare one Friday night per month to listen, care and help in our community. Our training programme equips you for everything you need to join one of our patrols, and aims to set the tone for continued learning while you are out on the streets. If you are interested in finding out more about our work, or are interested in becoming a Street Pastor, please contact Eric Hyom on 07736967921 or email erichyom@hotmail.com

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.

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.

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

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.

SCHOOL NOTICES

Casual Minibus Driver Vacancy - St Swithun Wells are seeking to appoint a minibus driver to start as soon as possible. The successful candidate will work as required, Monday to Friday. There will be the opportunity to help with school trips. More details and the application procedure can be found on our website <https://www.st-swithunwells.org.uk/Casual-Minibus-Driver/> or you can phone the school on; 02380 266210.

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 (CONFESSON)

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 14th February <i>St Cyril & St Methodius</i>	9.30am 5.00pm 6.00pm 6.00pm 6.30pm	Holy Cross St Swithun Wells OLQA St Joseph St Edward	Betty Norman RIP In Thanksgiving Felino & Angie Cagampang & Family (Thanksgiving)
Sun 15th February <i>Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time</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> Michael Meaney RIP Winnie Fung RIP Anniversary Michael Henbury RIP Samantha Harris (Special Intention) People of the Parish
Mon 16th February	9.30am	Holy Cross	Baby Thomas (Special Intention)
Tues 17th February	10.00am 6.00pm	St Andrew St Edward	Alfredo Xavier RIP Anniversary
Weds 18th February <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	<u>10.00am</u> <u>10.00am</u> <u>7.00pm</u> <u>7.00pm</u> <u>7.00pm</u>	<u>St Edward</u> <u>St Joseph</u> <u>Holy Cross</u> <u>St Andrew</u> <u>OLQA</u>	Kathleen Coggins RIP & Family
Thurs 19th February	9.30am <u>10.00am</u> 6.00pm	Holy Cross <u>OLQA</u> St Joseph	Deceased members of the Marucci family
Fri 20th February	10.00am 10.00am 12 Noon	St Joseph St Edward OLQA	Kenneth Atmore RIP
Sat 21st February	9.30am 5.00pm 6.00pm 6.00pm 6.30pm	Holy Cross St Swithun Wells OLQA St Joseph St Edward	Agnes Carter RIP (10th Anniversary) Jan Helena Ferenc 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) Kevin Harris (Wellbeing)

CLERGY & PARISH OFFICE

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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

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Finance Administrator: Christina Geleji

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Events & Communications Co-ordinator: Faye Harris

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Safeguarding: Please see Safeguarding posters in each of our churches for details of the Parish Safeguarding Reps. Diocesan Safeguarding: Ruth Attfield rattfield@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk