



The month of March is dedicated to St Joseph

2026

Fifth Week in Lent

Sunday Mass Cycle: Year A; Weekday: Year 2; Psalter 1

The live-stream from HC is at www.mcn.live

HC - Holy Cross; PJ/SsP&J - Ss Philip and James; STM - St Thomas More

Sat 21 Mar	Vigil of the Fifth Sunday in Lent
5:30pm HC	Vigil Mass: Louisa, 70 th birthday
Sun 22 Mar	Fifth Sunday in Lent
9:00am HC	Mass: Bertie Hill, RIP
11:00am PJ	Mass: Maureen and Andy Connelly 68 th Wedding anniversary
Mon 23 Mar	Feria
10:00am PJ	Mass: Eddie Hughes, RIP
Tue 24 Mar	Feria
9:40am HC	Lauds (Morning Prayer)
10:00am HC	Mass: Ian Douglass and Giga Piotrowska, RIP
7:00pm HC	<i>Lenten Penitential Service until 8:00pm</i>
Wed 25 Mar	The Annunciation of the Lord - Solemnity
10:00am HC	Mass: Harvey Papper, RIP <i>followed by Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation until 11:00am</i>
Thu 26 Mar	Feria
8:20am STM	Mass: All staff and students
9:40am PJ	Lauds (Morning Prayer)
10:00am PJ	Mass: Edwin and Nellie Yhap, RIP
Fri 27 Mar	Feria
10:00am HC	Mass: Pope Leo, all priests and religious - healing
10:30am HC	Stations of the Cross
7:00pm PJ	Mass: Pat Swallow - intention
7:30pm PJ	Stations of the Cross
Sat 28 Mar	Feria
10:00am PJ	Mass: Dalton family, RIP <i>followed by Lenten Penitential Service</i>
5:30pm HC	Vigil Mass: Peter and Mary McNulty, RIP
Sun 29 Mar	Palm Sunday
9:00am HC	Mass: Angela Howe, RIP
11:00am PJ	Mass: <i>Missa pro populo</i>
1:00pm PJ	Baptism: Ava Elizabeth Priest Celebrant: Deacon Crispin Walking-Lea

NB: We seek to open the Church **thirty minutes** before any Mass or liturgy

Responsorial Psalm:

With the Lord there is mercy, in him is plentiful redemption.

Holy Week in our parishes

Palm Sunday, 29th March

5:30pm: HC - Vigil Mass

9:00am: HC - Palm Sunday with the reading of the
Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

11:00am: PJ - Palm Sunday with the reading of the
Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Wednesday of Holy Week, 1st April

12:00pm: **Diocesan Chrism Mass** at the Cathedral

Maundy Thursday, 2nd April

10:00am: PJ - Morning Prayer (Lauds)

7:30pm: HC - Maundy Thursday Mass followed by
The Watch until midnight

Good Friday, 3rd April

11:00am: HC - Family Stations of the Cross

3:00pm: HC - The Passion of the Lord

3:00pm: PJ - The Passion of the Lord

7:00pm: PJ - Stations of the Cross

Good Friday is a day of Fasting and Abstinence from eating meat

Easter Celebrations

Holy Saturday, 4th April

10:30am: PJ - Morning Prayer (Lauds)

7:00pm: HC - Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

8:30pm: PJ - Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

Easter Sunday, 5th April

9:00am: HC - Mass of the Resurrection of the Lord

11:00am: PJ - Mass of the Resurrection of the Lord

Lenten Penitential Service

This Tuesday, 24th March, there is a **Lenten Penitential Service**
at HC from 7:00 - 8:00pm and on Saturday, 28th March at PJ
after Mass from 10:40am.

Maundy Thursday - Washing of the feet

On **Holy Thursday**, we will be having the traditional washing of
the feet of twelve parishioners, commemorating Jesus'
washing the feet of his disciples during the Last Supper, a ritual
symbolizing humility and service. If you wish to be among the
twelve parishioners, please email your name to the parish
secretaries or put your name on the lists in the narthexes.

Holy Cross parish office will be closed this Monday, 23rd
March and Thursday, 26th March.

Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is
on Wednesdays in HC after **Mass** until 11:00am, and on
Saturdays in SsP&J, also after **Mass**, until 11:15am.

Our Parish Priest is Fr Alexander Ibe, SMMM

Email: fralexander.ibe@northamptondiocese.org

Our Assistant Priest is Fr Richard Onuoha, SMMM

Email: frrichard.onuoha@northamptondiocese.org

The Presbytery, 2 Severn Way, Bedford MK41 7BX Tel: (01234) 352607

HC: Holy Cross Church, 355 Goldington Road, Bedford MK41 0DP

SsP&J/PJ: St Philip and St James Church, 2 Severn Way, Bedford MK41 7BX

Newsletters are available through **CASPARE**, and on our website. To receive our newsletter electronically,

please register with **CASPARE**, either by **QR code** or by **hyperlink** →, and tick the relevant box.

(Holy Cross: www.caspar.church/me/?ID=55969

(Ss Philip and James: www.caspar.church/me/?ID=55971

Deacon: Rev. Tony Quinlan: Tel: (01234) 950453; deacontony.quinlan@northamptondiocese.org

Deacon: Rev. Crispin Walking-Lea: Tel: 07941 884645; deaconcrispin.walkinglea@northamptondiocese.org

Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSR): HC; Shirley Whiterod 07955 670543 and SsP&J; Ann-Marie Blaney 07867 757598

Website: northbedfordcatholics.org.uk (Contact the Webmaster through the website)

Facebook: **North Bedford Catholic Community**

Parish Secretary HC, Sheila Allen (office closed for holibobs) Tel: (01234) 353116; parish.holycross@northamptondiocese.org

Parish Secretary Ss P&J, Mariateresa Quinlan (Tuesdays: 11.15am - 3:15pm) Tel: (01234) 353116; Parish.SsPhilipandJames@northamptondiocese.org

Items for the Newsletter to the editor, by the Sunday before publication. Tel/text: 07986 357 320; email: charlie.stallard@gmail.com



Family Stations of the Cross

Friday 3rd April 2026
11am – Good Friday

The stations of the cross will be outside weather dependant

Refreshments after in the parish room
Arts and crafts for the youth

North Bedford
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Sponsored

Spiritual Triathlon

The spiritual triathlon is back, so lets get ready to **listen, walk and pray** with the Lord, whilst building our united communities. Funds raised go towards programmes within our parish ministry.

Date : 16th May 2026
Start time : 9:30am
At : SS Philip & James

Please bring a labelled packed lunch. Drinks and cakes will be provided after the event.

Sign up information - the sign up sheet and sponsor forms are in the narthex of both churches. Please sign up by 05th April 2026. Any questions please contact Clare, Catechist.HolyCross@northamptondiocese.org

ALL WELCOME TO JOIN - UNDER 12'S PARTICIPATING MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT AT ALL TIMES.

North Bedford
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

CELEBRATION OF PENTECOST

We are looking for people to share their talents and perform at our Pentecost celebration. You can showcase your culture through music, dance, poetry and many more ways. Please contact Clare via email catechist.holycross@northamptondiocese.org by 26th April. Details of the event are below, there will be a full rehearsal on Saturday 16th May at 2.30pm at Holy Cross parish hall.

SUNDAY 24TH MAY 2026
1PM
HOLY CROSS PARISH HALL
355 GOLDINGTON ROAD, BEDFORD, MK41 0DP

The online **Rosary Group** meets from 8:00am to 8:20am weekdays on Zoom. ID: 833 1504 6319 Password: Rosary

The **Rosary and Divine Mercy Group** meets in SsP&J each Monday at 1:45pm Divine Chaplet, Rosary, cup of tea. What's not to like, eh?

Pray and Play
Still meeting at 6:30pm in Holy Cross church on Mondays.

Altar Servers' Training
Altar Servers' final rehearsal for the Easter Triduum is scheduled to take place Thursday, 26th March at 6:00pm at SsP&J for those serving at SsP&J, and Friday 27th March at 5:30pm at Holy Cross for at those serving at Holy Cross.

Easter Offering Envelopes
There are envelopes in each narthex marked **Easter Offering Envelopes**. This is our gift to our parish priests

25th Wedding Anniversary
We thank God for the 25th (Silver) Wedding Anniversary of **Timothy and Claire McEwan**. May God bless them with continued love, unity, and joy. May the years ahead be even richer than the ones behind. **Amen**.

40 pence for 40 days
By giving up 40p for 40 days through Lent please support local individuals and families facing hardship this Easter.

Easter Flowers - Parishioners are invited to contribute towards the Easter flowers in memory of a deceased loved one. The names of those to whom flowers have been dedicated will be placed beside the altar in both churches over Eastertide and a petition will be added to the intercessions at each Sunday Mass. Sponsorship envelopes, available in each narthex, should be returned by Monday.

doug-kelley-Easter Lilies-unsplash

You may make donations in the same way as if using the **DONA** machines in the narthexes of our churches.

Holy Cross Ss Philip and James

NORTH BEDFORD CHURCHES TOGETHER

Palm Sunday Stroll

Sunday 29 March 2026 at 2.30pm
From St Mary's Church Hall, Church Lane, Bedford to Holy Cross Church

Family fun and storytelling as we walk
Light refreshments

For information email families@stmarysgoldingtonuk

Hope in Ghana, which will be a centre for children with special needs and a place of care and support for their families. Many thanks for your continuing support.

Thank you from CAFOD
Thank you for your generous support this **Family Fast Day** – your kindness is helping families like **Shorai's in Zimbabwe** and **Rejoice's in South Sudan** grow food... You have shown what it means to love your neighbour this Lent – fasting, praying and giving so families can put food on the table. Find out how your donations are helping to build a better world at cafod.org.uk/thankyou
PS: **It's not too late to donate** – pick up a CAFOD envelope in church or visit cafod.org.uk/envelope

See previous newsletters for the details of:
Come and See - Discernment for Men
Next Saturday, 28th March at 11:00am in Our Lady help of Christians and St Lawrence, Olney

Catholic Young Artist and Young Writer Awards
The deadline for young artistic submissions is 22nd May. The deadline for young writers is 30th June. See: catholicunion.org.uk/2026/01/young-catholic-artist-award-2026/
MARRIAGE SUPPORT: If you are just in a rut or for more serious issues – Retrouvaille could be the solution. retrouvaille.org.uk Telephone: 0797 338 0443

In April, **Krystyna Sykes** will be walking the **Camino de Santiago**. Krystyna will walk the 100km over six days and is raising funds for the **SVP** through sponsorship.

St Vincent's
1:00pm to 3:30pm every Tuesday
at Holy Cross parish hall

The **Chisen Foundation** will be holding their annual **Easter Raffle** next Sunday, 29th March.

Tickets will be on sale in the narthex before and after 11:00am Mass at PJ this Sunday. Tickets drawn after Mass next week. All proceeds go towards the building costs of the **The House Of**

Hope in Ghana, which will be a centre for children with special needs and a place of care and support for their families. Many thanks for your continuing support.

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NBCC Parish Annual General Meeting 2026

The first **Annual General Meeting** took place at Ss Philip and James church on Sunday, 8th March at 3:00pm and was well attended by many of the groups who carry out their ministry in the parish and beyond.

Fr Alex opened the meeting with prayers followed by an address with detail of activities that have taken place and the overall scope of the meeting.

Liturgy

Baptism

First Holy Communion

Reception into the Church/RCIA

New organisations and groups

NBCC Youth Group

Prayer Group

Christian Women Organisation (CWO)

The Social Committee

Celebration of Pentecost – 24th May 2026

Our united parish started the celebration of Pentecost last year with an International Mass where all nationalities and communities in our united parish were represented.

Anniversary Celebrations – July 2026

Our clergy will be celebrating their 10th Anniversary in July. It will be an occasion of joy and thanksgiving to our united parish.

Jubilee celebrations – May and September 2027

Holy Cross parish will be celebrating its 70th anniversary September next year and Ss Philip and James its 60th Anniversary in May, also next year.

NBCC Welcomers

Kathy Goodwin started the meeting with a summary of the work carried out by the Welcomers in our two parishes.

Welcoming first started at Holy Cross church back in 2012. It came out of the Bishop's initiative called "*Walking Humbly with our God*". The Welcoming Team at Ss Philip and James was set up in 2022 and came from a group of parishioners who acted as 'stewards' during the Covid restrictions.

NBCC Lay-Readers

The *Lay Readers' Association* of the two churches are independent of each other but come together when there are joint parish liturgies like the Triduum, Christmas Carol Service, etc. The Objectives of the Lay Readers' Association is to proclaim the Sacred Scriptures with reverence at Masses and Liturgical events to allow the voice of God to be heard by all who hear us. Duties include reading the Sacred Scriptures, the Mass introduction and leading the bidding prayers in the absence of a Deacon.

The NBCC Youth Group was set up in September 2025 for those aged between 13 and 18. The Group meets in Holy Cross parish hall every second Friday of the month, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. 25 signed up initially and each session sees between 10 and 15 attendees. There is usually a mixture of games plus spiritual activity, quizzes and practice for Youth Masses

The Bible Study Group meets every Wednesday evening from 6:00 to 7:00pm on Zoom. The group started in 1983, in Putnoe, meeting in each other's houses. The change to Zoom took place because of the Covid-lockdown. During the years the group has studied all the books in the Bible alternating between Old and New Testaments.

Ss Philip and James Choir

We aim to enable the congregation to participate with the music as much as possible and hope that we provide a wide range of styles and hymn choices and to be as inclusive as we can. Whenever possible we also aim to provide music for additional special occasion services, where we often team up with singers and musicians from Holy Cross Sunday Masses, to form a joint choir. This pooling of our musical resources allows us to use a greater scope of music to honour these special occasions. Recent occasions have included our *Carols and Readings by Candlelight service*, *Confirmation services*, the *Fundraising Concert* and last year's *Holy Week services*.

Holy Cross Choir

Stephanie Davydaitis spoke about the ad hoc group that comes together for the 9:00am Mass at Holy Cross. The choir prepares on the morning of the Mass and is supported by Steve, the organist to lead sung worship.

Holy Cross Saturday Evening Vigil Mass Group

Elizabeth Ridley spoke about the Mass group for the 5:30pm Vigil Mass at Holy Cross. The group leads worship and particularly welcomes input from First Communion and Confirmation groups and collaborative work with particular celebrations throughout the year.

The Gospel Choir

The gospel choir was born out of the **Alpha** course in 2019 and started with two songs each week led by Judy on guitar and Marion on keyboard. The choir grew and now has a repertoire of over 150 songs and, last year, performed in a concert called "Saints Alive".

Associates of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit

The Associates, both men and women, gather on the first Wednesday of the month alongside Sr Dympna from Christ the King parish. The ADHS are part of a much wider international movement; to the Americas, both North and South, Nigeria, Burkino Faso and many more. The ADHS sponsors projects such as the St Charbel Project in Uganda, Outreach from Hawaii to Chile, to New York and back.

The Catenians Association

The Catenians were formed in Manchester in 1908 at the behest of Bishop Louis Casartelli during a time when Catholics were not fully admitted to society. Originally they were called "The Chums Benevolent Association" and changed to Catenians in 1911. "Catena" is Latin for a ceremonial chain. The Catenians are an association of Catholic friends trying to live their lives and support each other, families, Parish communities in accordance with their faith. Some charitable work is undertaken.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul - Holy Cross

Simone Moubarak introduced us to the St Vincent de Paul Society which has existed at Holy Cross and Ss Philip and James for many years. The motto of the charity is "*Turning concern into action*". The Holy Cross group meets fortnightly to review what has been done, to update about news of beneficiaries and plan future actions. Holy Cross has nine full members (DBS checked) and nine auxiliary members. Only full members may visit beneficiaries. The primary role is befriending the lonely with home visits, telephone calls, hospital care, shopping, giving lifts etc.

Ss Philip and James conference may be amalgamated with Holy Cross in due course.

The Water of Life Prayer Group

The Water of Life group began last year when the parish hosted the *Life in the Spirit Seminars* from May to June 2025. The programme was coordinated by Mick and Jayne Fagan from the *Northampton Catholic Charismatic Renewal team*. When the seminars finished, participants were very keen to continue and the group was born. Meetings take place on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm in Holy Cross church after the Gospel choir practise, with a short talk, teaching or reflection. The group is hoping to expand its outreach with day pilgrimages, Healing Masses, online prayer meetings.

Prego is a group of friends who decided to follow the Lent readings in March 2020. House meetings were replaced by Zoom every Tuesday at 4:15pm. They use the St Beunos Jesuit Spirituality outreach programme. The Prego initiative is now 20 years old.

Safeguarding

Ann-Marie Blaney spoke for the two safeguarding representatives, one for each of our parishes. Parish safeguarding is a statutory function of the parishes and their roles are to promote good and safe practices in all activities in the parish. They coordinate the completion of DBS disclosure forms and act as points of contact for concerns to be shared. If you have any immediate concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult contact the police; if you have less urgent concerns you may contact Ann-Marie or Shirley Whiterod - contact details at the foot of the front page of the parish newsletter.

CAFOD is the official overseas aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and is part of *CARITAS Internationalis*. We believe God wants everyone to flourish yet many people are struggling with conflict, the climate crisis, inequality and injustice. Across parishes, schools and homes in England and Wales we inspire people to raise money, petition politicians, and pray, so that together we can support communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East to find practical sustainable solutions to deep rooted challenges.

Inspired by Catholic social teaching we believe real change happens through partnership and that is why 86% of our projects in the world are led by local experts working within their communities. By relying on their firsthand experience and skills we are able to offer support that gets right to the heart of the world's biggest problems and keeps helping for years to come.

Bedfordshire Pastoral Area Council was set up by Bishop David as part of the diocesan strategy for the future. The aim to serve the mission of the church in Bedford and the neighbouring towns, to undertake new projects together and enhance the life of individual parishes. We are made up of the parish priests and lay representatives from nine parishes: Holy Cross; St Philip and St James; Christ the King; St Joseph; Our Lady of Ransom; Sacred Heart, Flitwick; St Peter's, Biggleswade; Sacred Heart, Leighton Buzzard; and St Francis of Assisi, Shefford. We meet five times a year to pray together and plan events that help us to connect all the parishes within the pastoral area. In the past we ran Bible Timeline courses in parallel across several parishes, we have produced Welcome booklets, containing information about all the groups in our individual parishes, and in Advent we have collated Christmas leaflets with all

the local parishes' Christmas Mass times.

Last year we promoted the Diocesan Lenten online accompanied prayer initiative, "*Journey of Hope*". We also produced a series of posters to be displayed in all the parishes, promoting a range of "*green ideas*". In October we organised a pilgrimage from each parish in our Pastoral Area to Saint Joseph's, which was designated a Pilgrim Church, where participants could gain a *Holy Year Plenary Indulgence*. All nine parishes in the area took part.

Flower Rota

There are currently eight ladies in St Philip and James flower rota and four ladies at Holy Cross. We are in need of more flower arrangers, and they need not be ladies. Some of the most famous flower arrangers are men!

The teams are in pairs and operate for two weeks. Flowers are bought by us and reimbursed from church funds. Flowers are not just "pretty decorations" but are often symbolic. In Easter we have white lilies for purity, innocence and the resurrection; Christmas, red Poinsettias for the star of Bethlehem and Holly for the Crown of Thorns; Rose for love, beauty and hope (Our Lady used roses at the miracle of Guadalupe).

The Rosary Group

The Rosary Group is another of the fortunate results of Covid. It was started on Zoom, by Stephanie, when she was Youth Minister, with Judy Buchanan. Judy created coloured images which were shown on the screen, alongside the title and a quotation from the New Testament, for each decade of the Rosary. During Covid the Rosary was said on Zoom every day. Now it is Tuesday - Friday mornings, covering the four mysteries as we include the Luminous mystery. On Mondays, instead of the usual five decades, there is a form of *Lectio Divina* which includes a meditation on the Gospel and one decade of the rosary. The group continues every week throughout the year with only an occasional break, such as over Christmas.

Pray and Play is for the children of our parishes aged six+ to meet during term-time outside of Mass or school, to pray together, learn about our Catholic faith, make friends and play together. We meet at Holy Cross church from 6:30 to 7:30pm. *Pray and Play* is a Marian group, we call it *Mother Mary's Little School of Prayer*. We teach and pray traditional catholic prayers: *Hail Mary, Angelus, Regina Caeli*. We learn about the lives of the saints, Marian apparitions and Eucharistic miracles and we are currently accompanying Our Lady, walking and praying *Stations of the Cross* through the eyes of *Centurion Longinus*.

Finance Committee

Peter Commons gave a brief talk about the role and scope of the Finance Committee for our joint parishes.

Counting Collection Group - Ss Philip and James

Counting Collection Group - Holy Cross

Banking Group - Ss Philip and James

Margaret Wells spoke about the tasks involved in counting, collecting and banking the collections at both churches.

This has been a very brief summary of the things that were shared at the meeting. It is a wonderful thing to think that so many of you are contributing so much to the spiritual life of the parish. A booklet will be produced giving the full text of the presentation together with all relevant contact details, times and meeting points.