

The Catholic parish of St Mary, Leek The Easter Season 2021

Every year at Easter Sunday Mass, the Church proclaims this reading from St John's Gospel (Jn 20:1-9)

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came from the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb," she said "and we don't know where they have put him."

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

The experiences of the first witnesses to Christ's resurrection are recorded so that our personal and communal faith will be invigorated and enthused.

This year during the extraordinary experience of the coronavirus pandemic and the gradual easing of lockdown, the experience of those first disciples gives us a good example to move ahead with faith.

The Easter Season

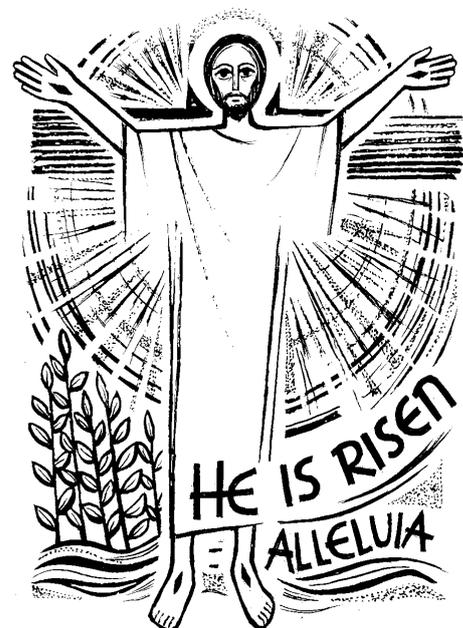
The Easter Season begins on Easter Monday; Easter Sunday properly belongs to the season called the Easter Triduum.

The first week of the Easter Season is also known as the Easter Octave. In the same way that a musical octave is a series of eight notes, the eight days of the Easter Octave extends the celebrations of Easter Sunday over eight consecutive days.

Alleluia! This Biblical exhortation of praise is used widely throughout the Easter Season. On the form used at Mass and at the Liturgy of the Hours (the Divine Office), it is taken from two Hebrew words, "Hallel" meaning, praise; and "uyah" meaning God. So throughout the Easter Season we "Praise God!"

The Acts of the Apostles Almost every day during the Easter Season, the First Reading at Mass is taken from the Acts of the Apostles.

It is generally agreed among the Biblical scholars that the Acts of the Apostles was originally the second half of what we now know as the Gospel according to St Luke. It is a written account of the life of the very early Church following the two foundational events: the Resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. As we follow the Acts of the Apostles, we discover how the early Christians made decisions to face new situations; we see how the Christian community grew; and, we follow the first Christian missionaries across the Middle East and Mediterranean.



The Easter Season at home

For many people, this Easter Season will be celebrated at home. The Church's vision for your home is a "Domestic Church", a small Christian community of consecrated persons: married, baptised and confirmed.

Sundays at St Mary's

10am Mass

Now that the "1 metre plus" social distance has been implemented in church it is possible to accommodate up to 108 people at Sunday Mass. This number is based on couples and family groups attending Mass. As the lockdown is easing it would be good to welcome more people back into church for Mass.

4pm Live stream Rosary and Benediction

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday – timings may occasionally change

940am Live stream Rosary

10am Live stream Mass

Online resources

Colour and Shape Children's Liturgy and Family Prayer Time

An initiative which started at the beginning of the first lockdown, Colour and Shape Children's Liturgy is a weekly video posted every Wednesday for families to use at home with children. It is an ideal resource for families of children preparing for First Holy Communion and Confirmation alongside being in church for Mass.

Dynamic Catholic: Feed Your Soul

This new free weekly email programme is a helpful look ahead to the next Sunday Gospel reading. Visit www.dynamiccatholic.com

Word on Fire Daily Gospel reflections from Bishop Robert Barron

Bishop Robert Barron is the auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles. He is a renowned scholar and pastor with a wide following on his social media platforms. To sign up for daily Gospel reflections visit www.wordonfire.org.

iPraywiththeGospel

This is a free app written for teenagers and young adults. It provides a daily Gospel reflection, lives of the saints and a resource of traditional prayers and quotes on a number of spiritual topics and issues. This app is available from the app store.

Pray as you Go

This app provides daily prayer where and whenever you are. It is based on the Jesuit tradition of prayer. This app is available from the app store.



The Sundays, Celebrations and Customs of the Easter Season

The Second Sunday of Easter: Sunday 11 April, 2021

This is the final day of the Easter Octave. The Gospel reading on this Sunday is always John 20:19-31 which records the scene on the evening of the first Easter Sunday and following Sunday with Doubting Thomas.

It is also known as Divine Mercy Sunday when the devotion to Jesus, the Divine Mercy, made known through St Faustina, is kept.

Third Sunday of Easter: Sunday 18 April, 2021

This Sunday another Easter Gospel is proclaimed. This year, Luke 24:35-48 is proclaimed. This Sunday, we are reminded of the link between the Risen Christ who feeds us at Mass.

Fourth Sunday of Easter: Sunday 25 April, 2021

On this Sunday in the three-year cycle of Bible Readings, an extract from John 10 is always proclaimed; in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, Christ identifies himself as the Good Shepherd and this gives this Sunday the popular title of Good Shepherd Sunday.

This day is also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. We pray that more people will be generous to answer Christ's call to serve him and the church as Priests or Religious Sisters. The day also reminds that each Christian is called to holiness of life in the situations and circumstances we live.

Fifth Sunday of Easter: Sunday 2 May, 2021 and Sixth Sunday of Easter: Sunday 9 May, 2021

The Gospel readings on these two Sundays are consecutive readings from John 15 (Fifth Sunday: Jn 15:1-8; Sixth Sunday: Jn 15:9-17). These passages are taken from the Last Supper but are used here by the Church as a preparation for the great celebration of Pentecost and the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and individual believers.

Ascension Thursday: Thursday 13 May, 2021

In his account of Christ's Ascension, St Luke tells us that, "... for forty days Christ continued to appear to them and tell them about the Kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3) This text places Ascension Thursday on the fortieth day of the Easter Season.

Throughout the Bible, the number 40 is associated with a period of preparation and purification; it is the origin of quarantine. For St Luke, this period of 40 days between the Resurrection and the Ascension is a reminder of two of the great characters of the Old Testament: Moses who spent forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai and received a second set of stone tablets with the Ten Commandments (Ex 24:12-18) and Elijah who walked to Mount Horeb (another name for Sinai) for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8).

So, for us, Christ's Ascension is a way forward associated with a personal journey to God and receiving God's life giving Law.



Pentecost Novena After the Ascension of Christ, the Acts of the Apostles tells us, "With one heart the Apostles joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." (Acts 1:14). This was the original Novena of Prayer.

On the nine days between Ascension Thursday and Pentecost Sunday, the Church prays to the Holy Spirit every day.

It is customary to pray the Pentecost Novena in preparation for the great celebration. Here are some traditional prayers for the Novena.

Father, pour out your Spirit upon the people of this parish, and grant us a new vision of our glory, a new experience of your power, a new faithfulness to your Word, and a new consecration to your service so that your love may grow among us, and your Kingdom come. Through Christ our Lord. God the Holy Spirit Comforter and Sanctifier, melt our hearts that we may accept your love, renew our minds that we may know your truth, strengthen our wills that we may serve you faithfully. Through Christ our Lord.

Seventh Sunday of Easter: Sunday 16 May, 2021

The Gospel reading on this Sunday is always an extract from John 17 which is Christ's prayer to God the Father during the Last Supper.

Pentecost Sunday: Sunday 23 May, 2021



Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fiftieth. For first century Jews, Pentecost, or Shavout in Hebrew, was one of the three great annual pilgrim festivals to Jerusalem. It celebrated the wheat harvest in the land of Israel (Ex 34:22) and the giving of the Law or in Hebrew, the Torah, by God to Moses at Mount Sinai; the Torah, or in Greek, Pentateuch, is the first five books of the Old Testament.

For Christians, Pentecost is the third most important celebration of the year after Easter and Christmas. It celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the very early Church and is recorded in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-11). This initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit transformed the timid Apostles into courageous heralds of the Gospel and catapulted the Church's mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Easter Duties The Church introduced the Easter Duties so that everyone could benefit from the Spiritual Blessings which can be obtained from being at Sunday Mass, going to Confession and receiving Holy Communion. In the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the period for making the Easter Duties is from Ash Wednesday to Trinity Sunday. Due to the pandemic, the obligation to make the Easter Duties is suspended.

Going to Confession If you wish to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, please be in contact with Fr Martin directly. Confession will be celebrated in the Presbytery car park at a social distance. Please bring a face covering.

An Act of Perfect Contrition If you are not able to get to Confession, this part of the Church's tradition is helpful: by showing sorrow for our sin and having a resolve to seek the Sacrament when possible, God will forgive us, even of serious sin when we make an Act of Perfect Contrition. We can use this traditional form:

O my God, because you are so good, I am sorry that I have sinned against you.
By the help of your grace, I will not sin again.

The Year of St Joseph This year is also the Year of St Joseph. On Friday 30 April at the weekly online School Mass, we shall be observing the celebration of St Joseph the Worker. Let's use this prayer to St Joseph

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.

