



Dear parishioners,

1. This coming Thursday, 11th February, we celebrate the **Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes**. In the words of the Divine Office: 'In the year 1858, the Immaculate Virgin appeared to Bernadette Soubirous near Lourdes in France, in the grotto of Massabielle. Through the poor little child, Mary called sinners to repentance, and thereby arose in the Church a marvellous spirit of prayer and charity, especially in helping the poor and the sick'.

The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes is also the **World Day of Prayer for the Sick**. This year we should pray especially for all those suffering from the effects of COVID-19 (both physical and mental suffering) as well as remembering all those who are sick for other reasons. We commend them all to God's compassionate love, through the intercession of our Mother, Mary.

2. Advance notice that Wednesday 17th February is **ASH WEDNESDAY**, the beginning of Lent. We will have three Masses to mark this day – **at 6.45 am, 9.30 am and 8.00 pm**. At each Mass, ashes will be blessed and distributed. Please note, due to the on-going coronavirus pandemic, ashes will be given in a slightly different way to usual. By order of the Vatican, ratified by our own bishops, ashes will be sprinkled on the head, rather than marked on the forehead. This is actually the traditional, and normal, method of giving ashes as practiced in most European countries (and attested to in the Bible). In any case, ashes are, of course, only an outward sign of our inner desire to repent for our sins and amend our lives in preparation for Holy Week and Easter.

3. We are not able to offer our usual Lent talks in the parish this year, however this online course by Mauro Iannicelli comes highly recommended. Please follow the link to discover more:

<https://comeandsee.org/lent.html>

4. Lastly, please don't forget that we need your help with stewarding in church. Our churches are permitted by law to open and hold services during the lockdown, but they need to be safe places. **Our very special gratitude goes out to our stewards**, whose work is now more important than ever. If you value our open churches, and the ability to come to Mass, please do consider volunteering as a steward – we need your help.

We have a 'Doodle' where you can sign up to help during February – please follow this link:

<https://doodle.com/poll/znzccbchaqzge2d8>

If you have any difficulty using the Doodle, or other questions, you can email us at holyghostvolunteers@gmail.com. Thank you!

With our best wishes and every blessing,

Fr Richard and Fr Giovanni