

**PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE SICK**  
 Ann Berry, Christine Rogers, David Noble, Patrick Hullinson, Florence Ward, Barbara Murphy, Della McKernan, Dale Broom, Jackie Berry, Bernard Holt, Patricia Greene, Bernadette Greene, Eileen Butt, Frank Colgan, Marian Whyte, Stephen King, William Lyons, Beth Anistead-Cargan, Sue Zimny, Tom Cutler, Rosemary Keyes, Anne Holland, Caroline Hoad, Kevin McCormick, Ellen Sumaya.

**PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE DEAD**  
**Recently Deceased:** Christopher Anderson, Walter Blanchfield, Seamus Carthy, Pamela Taylor, Anne Pickavance and Frances Reynolds.  
**Anniversaries:** Una Anderson, Lilian Cheetham, Margaret Tomlinson, Michael Goodman, Joseph-Norman and Mary Dale, Brian Miller, Lorraine Bigras, Dan McCormack.

**WISDOM OF THE SAINTS**

“Nothing is far from God. All I ask is that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be.”  
 St Monica

“Joy is the sure sign of a heart that sincerely loves God.”  
 St Philip Neri

“Conversion is nothing more than moving the gaze from below to above; a simple movement of the eyes is enough.”  
 St Carlo Acutis

“You ask me whether I am in good spirits? How could I not be so? As long as faith gives me strength, I will always be optimistic and joyful.”

St Pier Giorgio Frassati



	Last week's collection was £1021.72	<b>£££</b>	The monthly figure for Standing Orders: £1380.00
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	This week the Sacred Heart Lamp burns for everyone in the parish.		This week, Our Lady's Lamp burns especially for those who are sick.
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**OUR LADY OF GRACE PARISH, PRESTWICH**

**PARISH PRIEST Fr. PHILIP CALDWELL**  
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**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT**

<b>Sunday 22nd February</b>	<b>Holy Masses 9am &amp; 11am</b>
<b>Monday 23rd February</b>	<b>Holy Mass 12 noon</b>
<b>Tuesday 24th February</b>	<b>Holy Mass 12 noon</b>
<b>Wednesday 25th February</b>	<b>Holy Mass 12 noon</b>
<b>Thursday 26th February</b>	<b>Holy Mass 12 noon</b>
<b>Friday 27th February</b>	<b>Holy Mass 12 noon</b>
<b>Saturday 28th February</b>	<b>Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament                  Confessions 11.40am-12.50pm, 4-4.40pm                  Holy Mass 11am Vigil 5pm</b>

## Thank-You

Before I go, I'd like to say thank-you to all those who have made my time here a happy one, all those who have supported me with kindness and their prayers. In particular, I'd like to express my gratitude to the women who work in the presbytery and have ensured that your church is open and you get what you require, those who joined the various committees and helped with the renovations and finance, the social committee who have brought people together and raised essential funds, those who have supported various parish groups and agencies—and all of you faithful people who make the community here. Thanks for your gifts, cards, good wishes and prayers. I will celebrate Mass for your intentions and always keep Our Lady of Grace in my prayers.

## Fr Benjamin

Fr Benjamin, a diocesan priest on loan from Nigeria and waiting to take up an appointment in Bacup, has kindly agreed to look after the parish before Fr. Gerard comes. He will be resident here for a few weeks and ensure you are well looked after. Fr Gerard will arrive at the parish in time to celebrate St Patrick's Day with you. He is convalescing well but needs to get back to full strength before starting as Parish Priest.

## St Patrick's Celebration

The OLOG Social Committee have arranged for a St Patrick's Night Celebration to take place in the Parish Hall on Saturday 14th March at 7.30pm. Tickets are available after the Masses this weekend but because of the space required for dancing, numbers be limited to 90. Entrance by ticket only—price £10.

## Prayer Group

The Prayer Group will meet in the Cottage on Monday 23rd March at 7pm as usual. All welcome.

## RCIA

There are six young men who are preparing to join the community at Easter. I am sorry not to be here to see such enthusiastic and committed people come to join us—I'm sure you will welcome them and make space for some new life in the ranks. Please keep them all in your prayers as they approach Baptism and Reception—I'm sure there's a priest for the future among them!

## Raise a Glass

Is your glass half full or half empty? It's a good thing, sometimes, to raise it and check - especially before last orders! Lent - and, on occasion, life - makes us think of the last things, so before time is called on us here, I thought we could lift our glasses together, check how much is in, and raise a toast to each other and to God.

There's a part of each of us that thinks the glass is half empty: just a few even feel it's almost drained - who find life a burden and always complain. It was so from the beginning. When God created us, He set us in a garden to the east - in a land where the sun doesn't set, is always rising. Naturally, things flourished there. God made everything spring up for our pleasure and wellbeing. The going was good. But even then we wouldn't accept our glass was full: There was just one thing that we were thinking about - despite all the other trees and all their beauty, we wanted the one that wasn't good for us! No matter the reality, we ignored the fact that our glass was full and believed the lies that we were being short changed!

Part of the purpose of Lent is to have a long, slow look at the reality of our lives and tackle the lies. We're all of us still 'east of Eden' - we've life and breath and good things to eat and make us happy - we're all free. Why then are we captivated by the one thing out of reach and about which we love to complain? Why do we place it in the middle of our garden and allow it to spoil everything else? Well, because that's part of our fallen nature. St Paul said, that now we look through a glass darkly - we don't see straight - but even now, we can see that however things might seem, our gifts far outweigh our problems and our pain: our glass is not just half full but overflowing with an abundance of grace to help us appreciate who we are and all we have. That we're the children of God, destined for eternal life.

So when we're tempted to believe that the sun won't rise again and isn't shining, and that the vale of tears is our only home, God gave us the Spirit of Jesus so that we can see through the wilderness to the truth. Because just as the tempter said to Him, he says to us: "Bread alone" - the old lie that you've only got this and not that. "If you are ..." - the clever deceit of "if only" - if only, I were someone else or somewhere else, rich or holy. And the final flourish: "All" - if only I could have it all. Meanwhile, we forget there's bread on the table, a family around us, and God in His heaven.

Now's the time to be true to who we are and to what we've been given - to remember at the start of Lent, and as we say goodbye, that the glass is not half full but overflowing: That in his goodness God provides for his people life, breath, homes, family, a place to worship and the priests they need. The blessing cup that we raise - no matter who and no matter where, is one of communion with Christ - who is the fullness of life and our salvation.